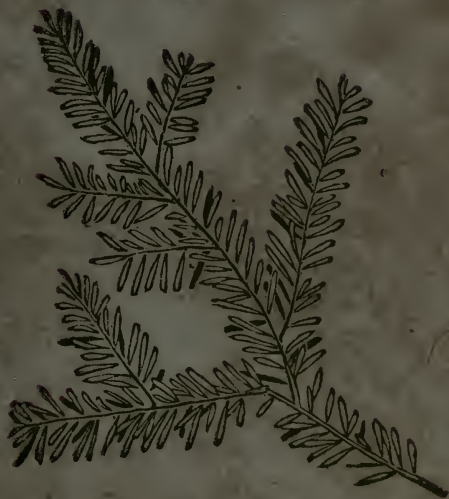
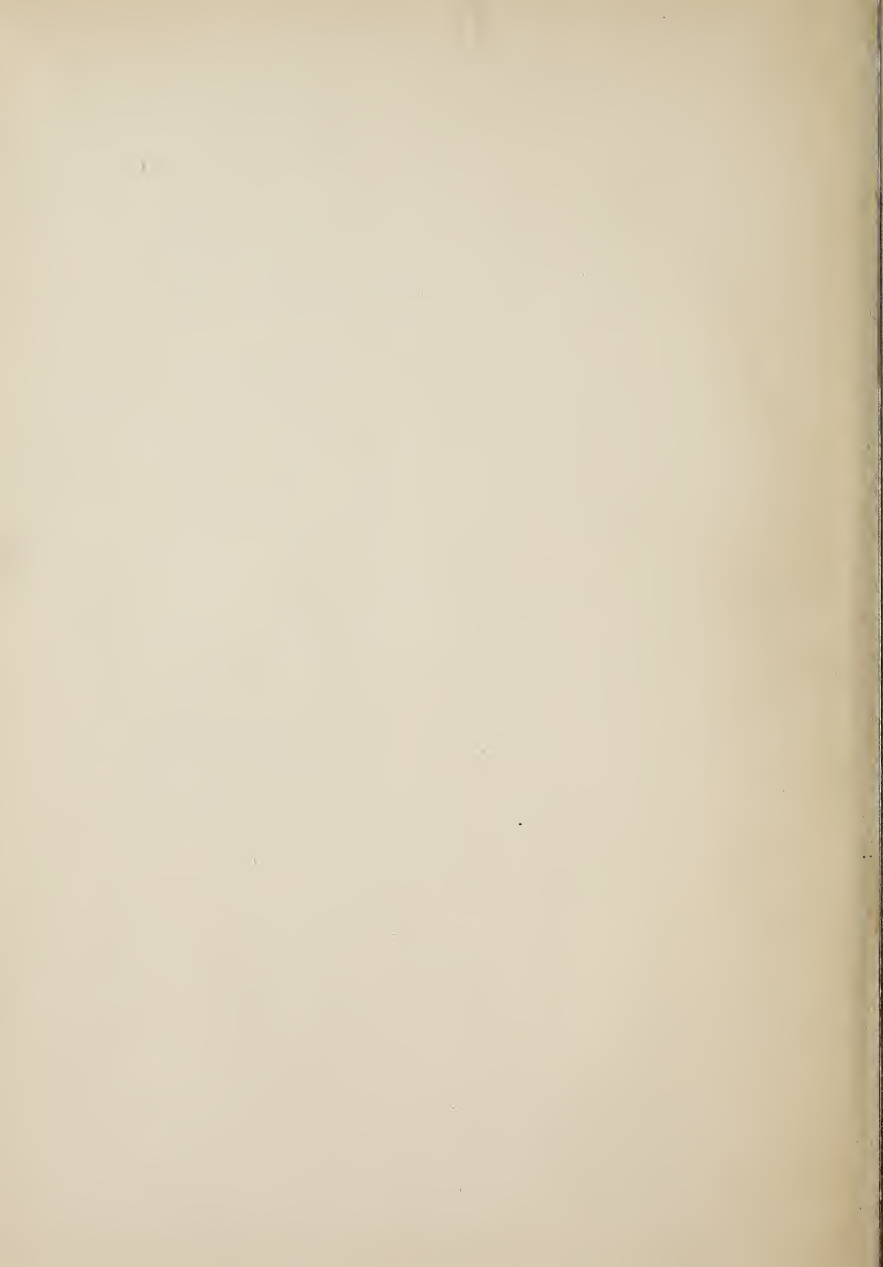


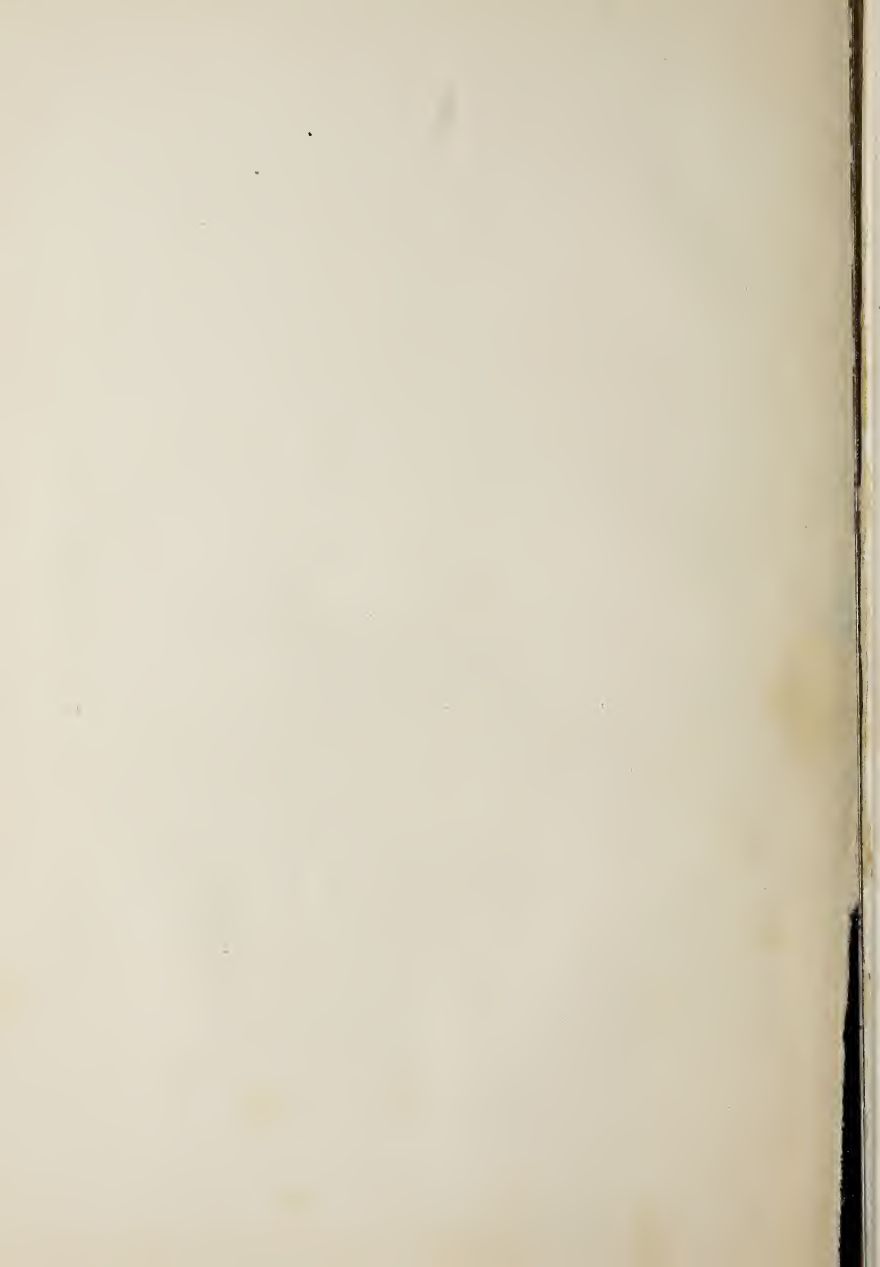
SKETCHES OF  
HISTORIC BENNINGTON



BY  
JOHN V. D. S. AND CAROLINE R. MERRILL



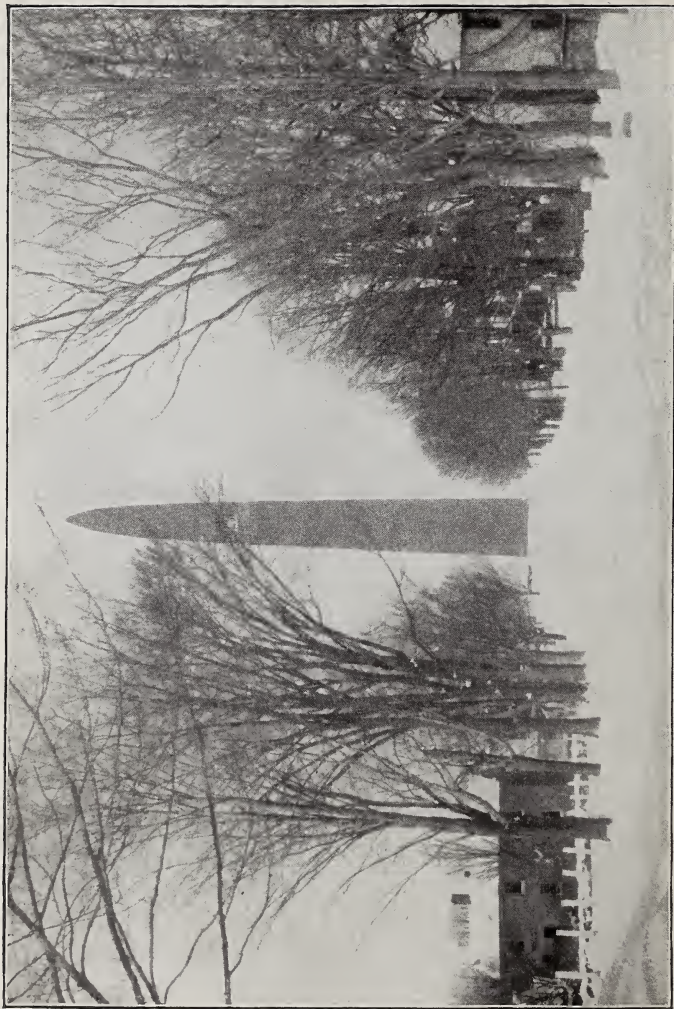






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THE BATTLE MONUMENT

# SKETCHES OF HISTORIC BENNINGTON, Vt.

BY

JOHN V. D. S. AND CAROLINE R.  
MERRILL



CAMBRIDGE

Printed at the Riverside Press

1898

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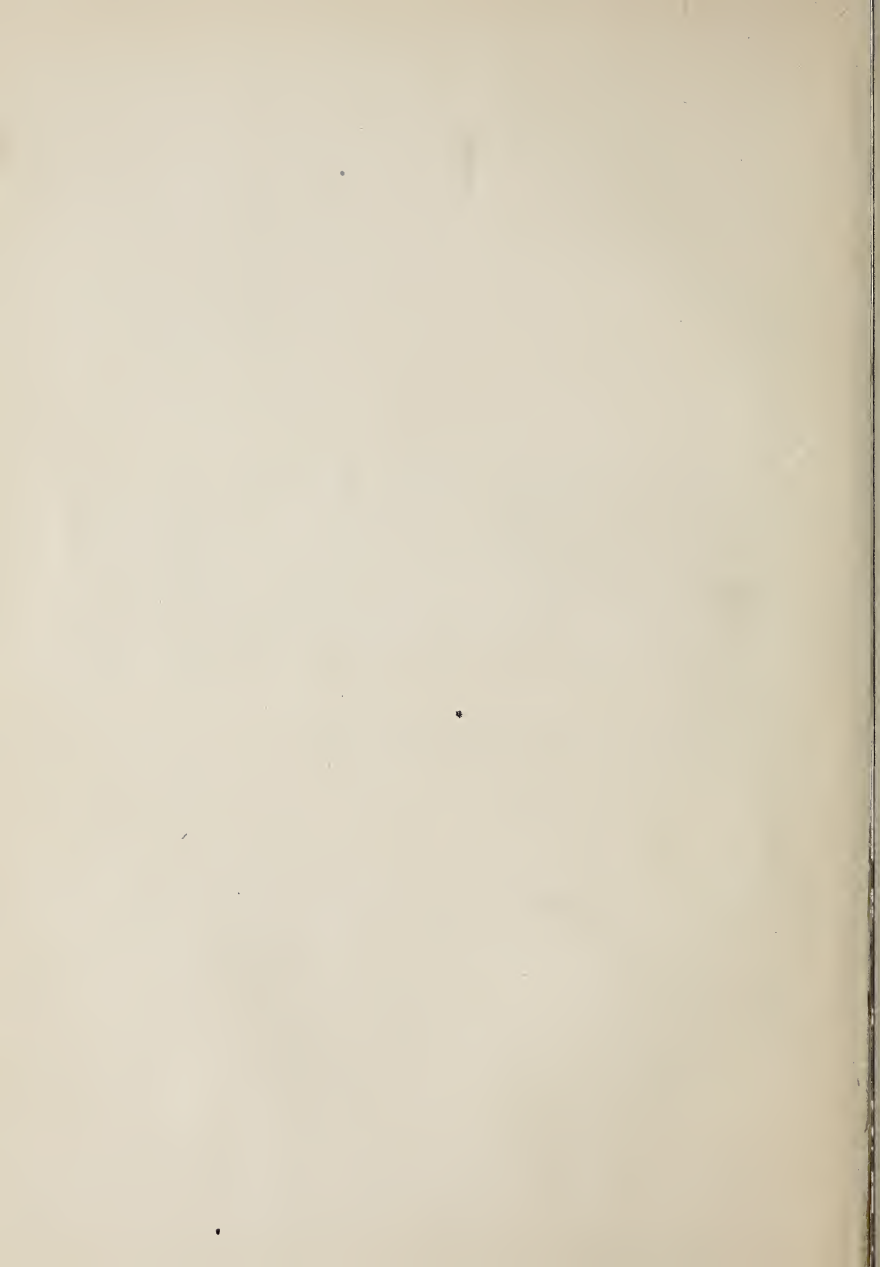


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These "Sketches of Historic Bennington" have been written to perpetuate the memory of Captain Samuel Robinson, "Bennington's Pioneer Settler," by two of the great grandchildren of Judge Jonathan Robinson, his youngest son; and at the request of friends, who wish to preserve a few facts connected with the town's early history.

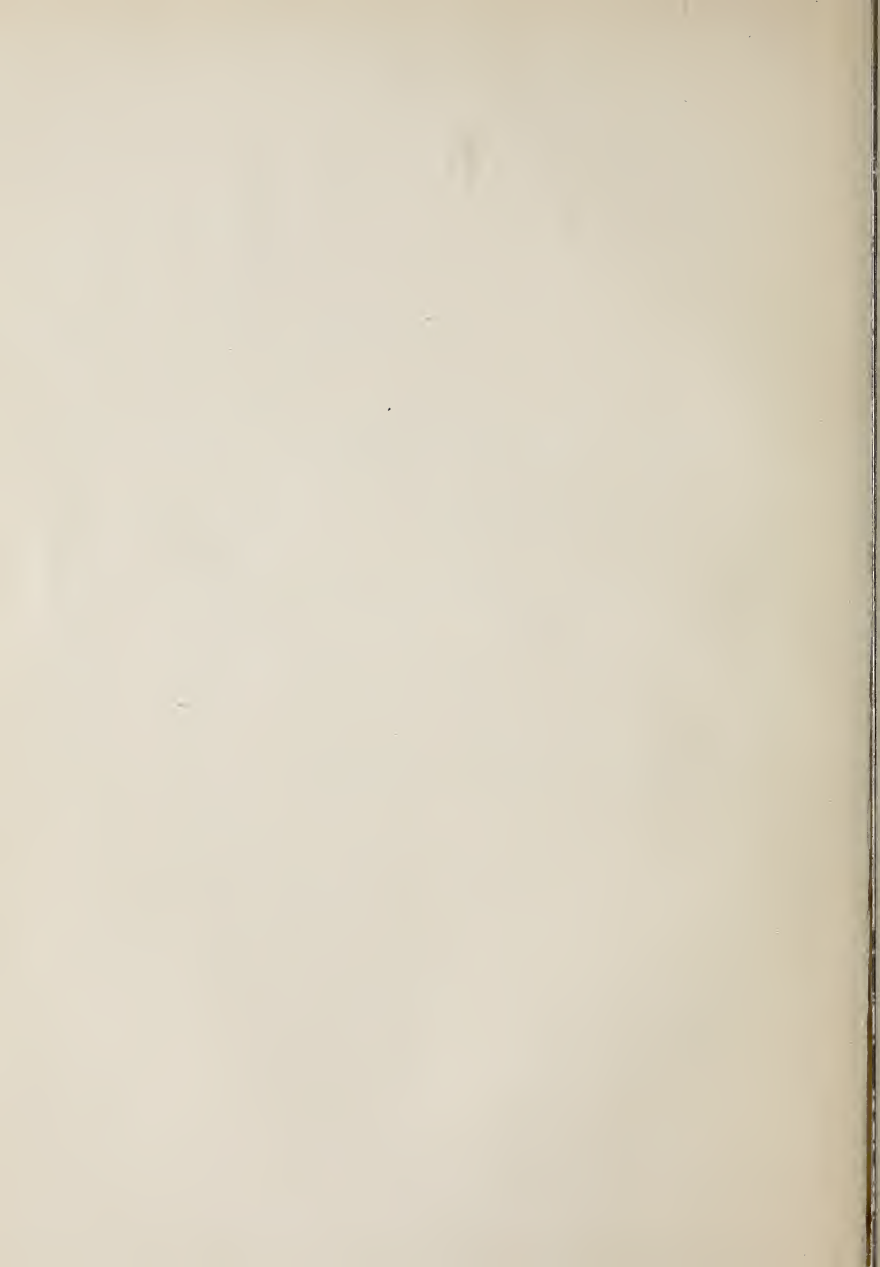
COUNCIL PLACE, BENNINGTON, May 2, 1898.

*James R. Sykes - 1.50*



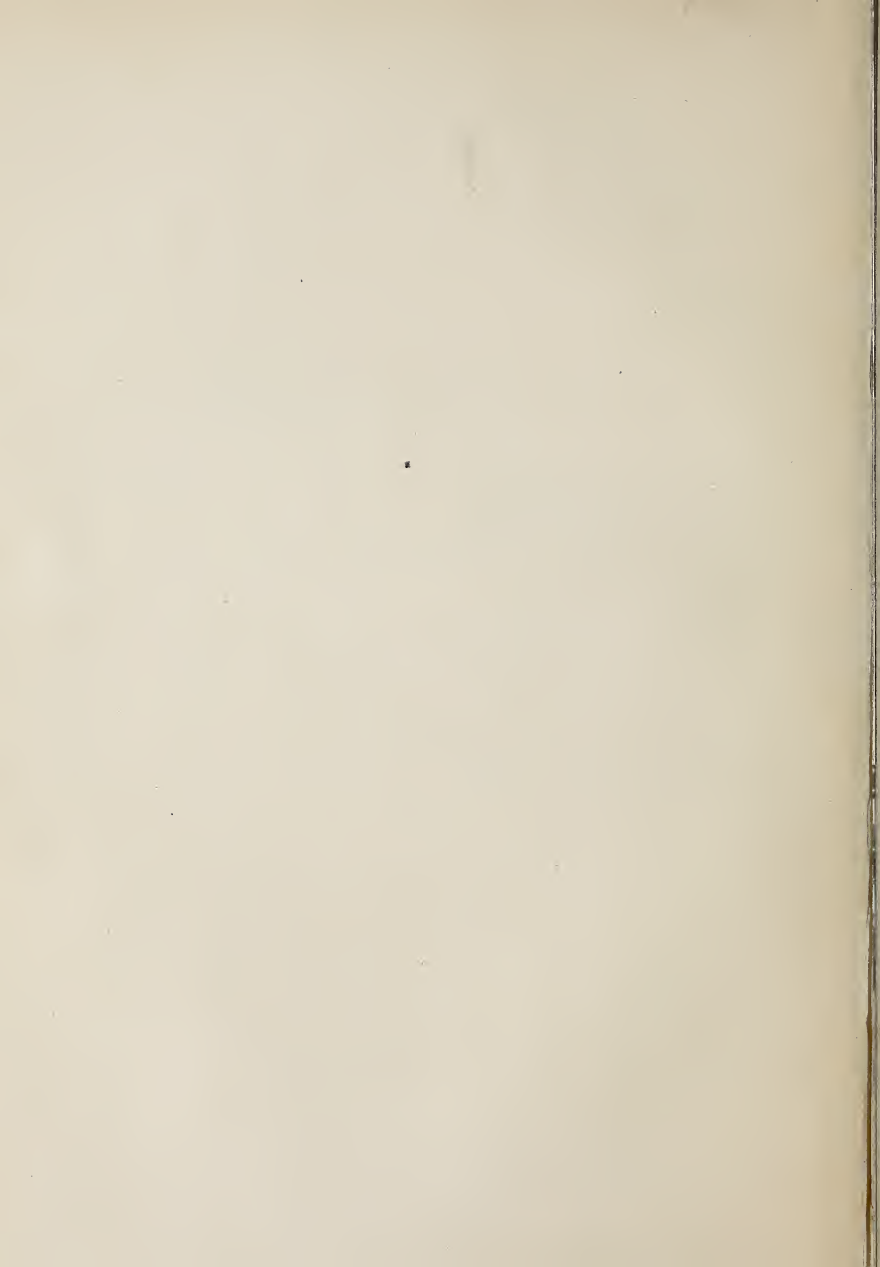
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## BENNINGTON'S PIONEER SETTLER

VERMONT was known as the "Wilderness," until after the subjugation of Canada by the English in 1749. But when peace had been restored, Benning Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, was commanded by his Majesty, King George Second, to make grants of unimproved lands within his government, and Bennington, named in his honor, was the first township granted in what is now known as the State of Vermont.

Soldiers serving in the colonial armies were often obliged to march through the "Wilderness," and many of them, attracted by the beauty of the scenery and the fertility of the soil, planned to return some time, and on its beautiful hillsides, or along its peaceful valleys, establish settlements.

One of these colonial soldiers, Captain Samuel Robinson, returning from Lake George, and mistaking the Walloomsac River for the Hoosac, came to Bennington, and encamped here with a few of his comrades. He was so delighted with the beauty

of the place and the goodly soil that he called it the "Promised Land," and determined to come back and make it his home.

About thirteen years after the township of Bennington was granted by New Hampshire, he had succeeded in persuading some of his friends to join with him in purchasing the rights of the original grantees, and his first party of settlers arrived in Bennington on June 18, 1761.

This party consisted of the families of Peter Harwood, Eleazer Harwood, Samuel Pratt, and Timothy Pratt, from Amherst, Massachusetts, Captain Samuel Robinson, with the rest of his family and others, arriving later in the summer and fall.

Captain Samuel Robinson, the pioneer settler of Bennington, was born at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 4, 1707. He was descended from some of the oldest families of New England. His father, Samuel Robinson, was born at Bristol, England, on April 20, 1680, and was in all probability a descendant of the Rev. John Robinson, of Leyden.

He came over to this country and settled at Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he married Sarah Manning, the daughter of Abihaile Wight, on March 23, 1703.



Abihaile Wight was the daughter of John Wight, of Dedham, Massachusetts, and the granddaughter of Thomas Wight, who emigrated to Dedham, and died there on March 17, 1673, thus being the great-great-grandfather of our pioneer settler.

Captain Samuel Robinson was married to Marcy Leonard in 1730. They had ten children, nine of whom lived to remove to Bennington.

Mr. Robinson was an active Christian, and a deacon in the old church at Hardwick, where he had resided for twenty-six years before moving to Bennington.

He brought up his large family of children in the fear of the Lord, and to judge from the worn condition of his copy of Isaac Watts's "Way of Instruction by Catechisms," the "principles of piety and goodness must have been early instilled into their minds."

The first catechism in this book is written for children from three to four years of age, of whom Watts writes: "Children of ordinary capacity at three years old or a little more, may be informed or made to see that they are sinful Creatures, that they have offended the Great God that made them, that they cannot save themselves from his Anger,"

and the following is an example of the questions and answers : —

“ What must become of you if you are wicked ? ”

“ If I am wicked I shall be sent down to everlasting Fire in Hell, among wicked and miserable Creatures.”

As I turn over the pages of this timeworn copy, I can almost imagine that the yellow leaves bear traces of tears, dropped by his little children over a century ago.

Mr. Robinson was not only a good man, esteemed by all who knew him, but a brave and loyal soldier.

“ He was a Captain in Colonel Ruggles’ regiment of provincials, and served as such on the frontier in the years 1755 and 1756, and was in the battle of Lake George.”

He was also the acknowledged leader in all affairs connected with the Bennington settlement, and “ was the first person appointed to a judicial office within the limits of the State.”

Persons wishing to settle in the township of Bennington were accustomed to go to Mr. Robinson to purchase lands. He was a strict Congregationalist, and wished only those of the same faith to settle near him.

So he always asked the same question of every newcomer: "To what denomination do you belong, my friend?"

If the reply were, "I am a Congregationalist," he was allowed to settle on the Hill; but if he proved to be an Episcopalian, Baptist, or Methodist, while he was permitted to purchase land, it must be in a different part of the township.

One day a man came to Mr. Robinson, who wished to obtain some land, and to the usual question, "To what denomination do you belong, my friend?" answered, "What in h— has that to do with you?" Perhaps mentioning a warmer climate so unexpectedly suggested to Mr. Robinson the thought of sending him further south, for he immediately dispatched him to a place which in its early history was more noted for its beautiful scenery than for its religious growth.

When disputes arose between the governors of New York and New Hampshire concerning the boundaries of their provinces, and the settlers of Bennington were ordered to repurchase their lands under New York grants, they joined with other townships in making a steady resistance, and appointed Captain Samuel Robinson their agent to

present their grievances to his Majesty, King George Third.

Mr. Robinson sailed for England on the 25th of December, 1766, and reached London on the 30th of January following.

The New Hampshire claimants were not able to provide him with sufficient money to make his mission entirely satisfactory ; for in his letters to his family he writes of " the great expense of living in London, of being in want of money," and that " it is hard to make men believe the truth where there is ready money on the other side."

It must also have been a great trial to have remained away so long from his wife and younger children, and to have left them exposed to all the dangers which surrounded the early settlers at that time in the " Wilderness."

But he was fortunate in leaving his children in the care of a woman so brave as his wife. The following account, written by Mrs. Allen, the granddaughter of Mrs. Samuel Robinson, whose mother was the little Anna mentioned, will illustrate her bravery : —

" When living in their log house, while her husband was in England, and her children, David,

Jonathan, and Anna, were with her, wolves came at night, and tried to obtain entrance at the doors and windows. She knocked upon the door to frighten them away, then seized firebrands from the fire, opened the door, and waved them and shouted with all her strength." The wolves fled away and were never seen again.

Mrs. Robinson, like many of the Bennington settlers, was of a "superior sort," intellectual in her tastes, and a great reader of history, both ancient and modern. It is said that she wept when leaving a cultivated home for a life in the "Wilderness;" but she so instilled her own tastes into the minds of her sons that she lived to see her third son, Moses, governor of the new State of Vermont, and her youngest son, Jonathan, the leading lawyer of the county.

Jonathan Robinson was a great jury lawyer, and in pleading the cause of his client, being very sympathetic by nature, would plead with such earnestness and feeling, his eyes often suffused with tears, that invariably he would win his case.

One day in court when he was pleading most earnestly for a client, the lawyer on the opposite side was heard to whisper to a friend, —

“Jonathan has begun to cry, — the case has gone to h—.”

He was a keen judge of character, and would always try to save the life of an innocent man, no matter how strong public feeling might be against the accused. Some relatives of the early settlers had been massacred or captured by the Indians, which caused a very bitter feeling in town against them ; so at one time, when an Indian was arrested for murder and brought to Bennington for trial, there was very little chance that his life could be saved. Judge Jonathan Robinson, however, felt sure that he was unjustly accused, and determined to clear him if possible. This he succeeded in doing, and was very thankful that he had been successful in saving the life of an innocent red man when, a few years later, the real murderer confessed that he had committed the crime which had nearly caused the poor Indian to be hanged.

Jonathan Robinson was appointed chief judge of the Supreme Court a few years after the death of his mother, and occupied a leading position in the Republican party of the State for many years.

He was only ten years of age at the time of his father's journey to England in behalf of the New



Hampshire claimants ; but four of his brothers were already married, and living in homes of their own.

With so many dear ones awaiting his return, how anxious must Samuel Robinson have been to speedily accomplish his mission, and take his departure from England.

When at last he was so far successful that a formal order of the king in council was made, commanding the Governor of New York, "upon pain of his Majesty's highest displeasure, to make no grant whatever of any part of the lands in dispute, until his Majesty's pleasure should be further known," July 24, 1767, he determined to return and leave his affairs in the hands of Samuel Johnson, an eminent lawyer from Connecticut, who had been petitioned to assist him in his mission.

But just as Mr. Robinson was ready to embark, he was unfortunately taken with the smallpox, and although, Mr. Samuel Johnson wrote his wife, "no attention, care, or expense was spared for his comfort," yet he died in London on the 27th of October, 1767, and was interred in the burying-ground belonging to Mr. Whitfield's church, where he usually attended public worship.

"He was sensible to the last and calmly resigned

to the will of Heaven " that he should die so far away from the loved ones, and his home on the beautiful Hill which he had called the " Promised Land."

So strong a faith as this brave soldier's must surely be rewarded, and we no longer wonder at the words written in the little catechism, under his father's name, by his youngest son Jonathan.

CAPTAIN SAMUEL ROBINSON

His book,

Who now is dead and gone out of  
this world, in exchange for a better  
we hope.

Written by his son Jonathan,

March 4, 1770.

A magnificent shaft on the brow of the Hill stands as a memorial to those brave men who fought in the Bennington battle " that liberty might live."

A beautiful work of art, a catamount in bronze, marks the site of the " Catamount Tavern." But to honor the name of the man who left home and friends to protect the rights of the early Bennington settlers, no effort, as yet, has been made by the people in the town which he settled.

Only a simple slab of white marble in our old



churchyard, erected by the thoughtfulness of his grandson, David Robinson, Jr., tells us the story of the settlement of Bennington, and his death abroad.

"To justice, freedom, duty, God, and man forever true,  
Strong to the end, a man of men, from out the strife he passed."

## IN REVOLUTIONARY DAYS

ABOUT two years after the death of Mr. Robinson, Lieutenant-Governor Colden, coming again into power, began making grants of lands already occupied under the New Hampshire titles.

Ejectment suits were now brought against some of the Bennington people, who were just beginning to enjoy the homes which they had labored so hard to establish ; and although the suits were to be tried at Albany, where they had little reason to believe that they would obtain justice, yet they determined to go there and defend their rights.

These suits all went in favor of the plaintiffs ; and after the trials were over, Ethan Allen, then living in Bennington, who had taken an active part in preparing these cases for trial, was told by some of the Albany officials to go home and advise his Green Mountain friends to make the best terms they could with their New York landlords.

Allen replied that "the gods of the valleys were not the gods of the hills;" and when asked to ex-

plain the meaning of his words, answered, "If they would come to Bennington, the meaning would be made clear to them."

If the judgments obtained by the plaintiffs at Albany were carried into effect, great injustice would be shown toward the settlers; so a town meeting was called at Bennington to determine what should be done, and it was decided that "the execution of writs of possession should be resisted by force, if necessary."

This resolve of the Bennington people, who maintained the leadership in the opposition to New York, to resist the execution of the Albany judgments met with great approval in other townships settled under the New Hampshire grants.

At first the settlers were assisted by their friends and neighbors in resisting the attempts of the New York officers to serve writs of ejectment, but as these attempts became more frequent, a military force was organized to resist the wrongful claims of New York.

This force was under the command of Ethan Allen, with the title of Colonel, and Seth Warner was one of its captains.

These brave defenders of the New Hampshire

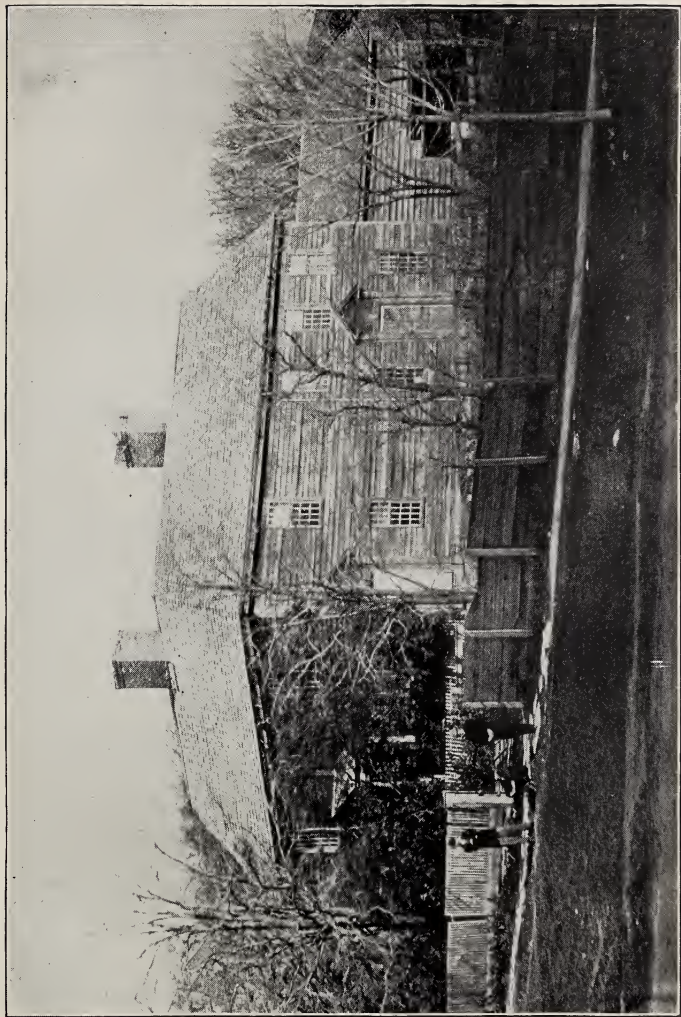
title were soon known as the "Green Mountain Boys," on account of a threat of Governor Tyron that he "would drive the settlers from their possessions into the Green Mountains."

Committees of Safety were also organized in several towns of the New Hampshire grants to watch over the affairs of the settlers, "and their decrees in regard to their land-title controversy were received and obeyed as laws."

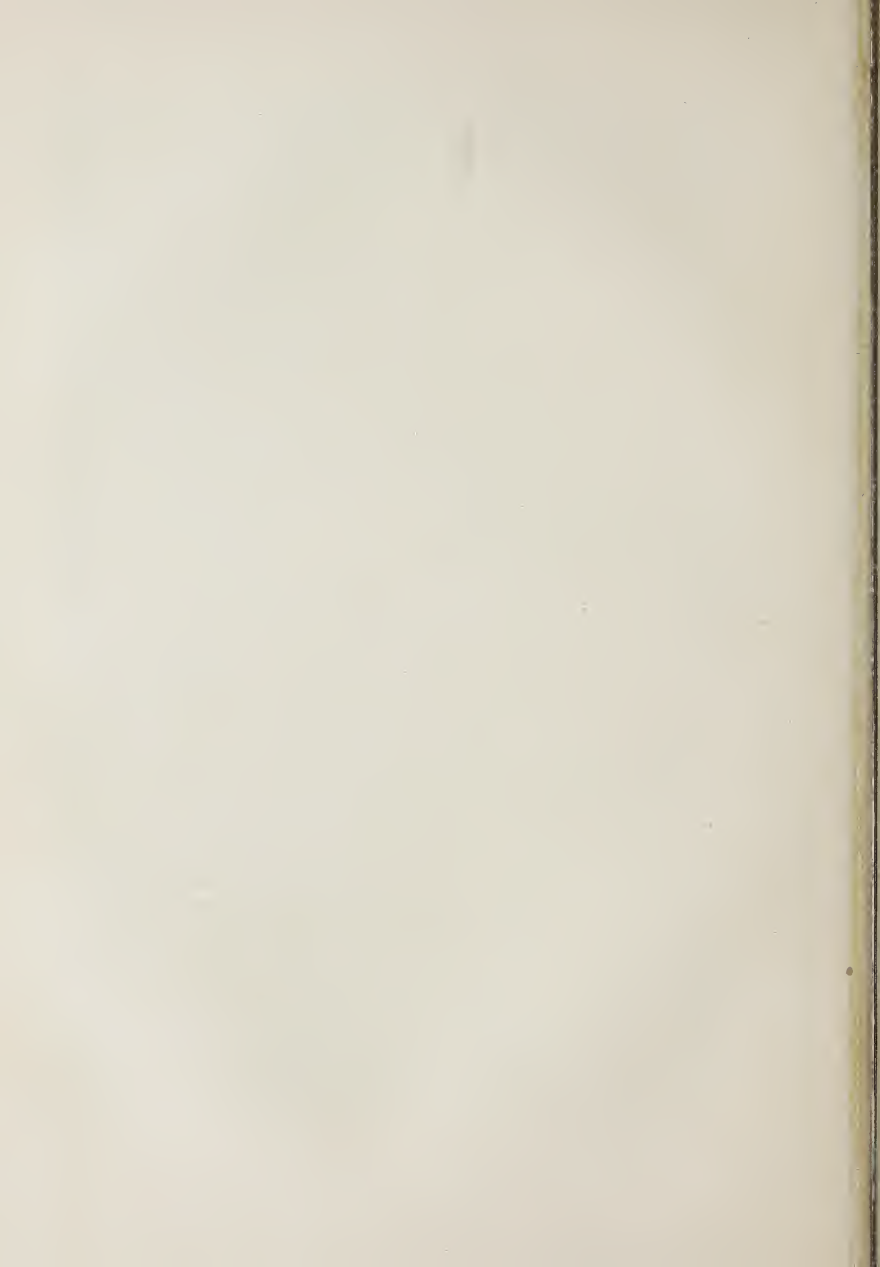
At Bennington the Council of Safety was held at the Green Mountain Tavern, kept by Stephen Fay, on whose sign-post was placed about this time a stuffed catamount, looking toward New York and grinning defiance, which later caused its name to be changed to Catamount Tavern.

Here Ethan Allen, Seth Warner, and others met to judge those who were considered friendly to New Yorkers, or who had dared to accept any office of honor under them, and who, when found guilty, were in danger of "being viewed."

When New York officers were caught serving writs of ejectment, they were punished by the "beech seal," defined by Allen to be "a chastisement of the New York claimants with the twigs of the 'Wilderness,' the growth of the land they coveted."



THE CATAMOUNT TAVERN





Sometimes their punishment of offenders was more ridiculous than severe ; for instance, when Dr. Samuel Adams, of Arlington, deserted their cause, they arrested him and carried him to Bennington for trial, where he was sentenced to be tied in an armchair, and to be suspended for two hours beneath the sign of the Catamount Tavern.

“ This mild and exemplary disgrace had a salutary effect on the doctor and many others,” and thus the New Yorkers learned to fear the displeasure of the “ Green Mountain Boys.”

But at the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, the disputes concerning the provincial boundaries were forgotten in the anxiety of every loyal American to join in the struggle against a common enemy.

Upon receiving news of the battle of Lexington, Ethan Allen said, “ the men of the New Hampshire grants were almost distracted ;” and the principal officers of the Green Mountain Boys, and other prominent men, met at Bennington, and in the council chamber of the Catamount Tavern decided “ the cause of the country to be just,” and that “ resistance to Great Britain had become the indispensable duty of a free people.”

They also planned here at this time the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, and when "messengers were sent to Bennington to engage Colonel Ethan Allen and his associates in the expedition against that fort," they found them ready for the enterprise.

On the evening of May 9, 1775, Ethan Allen, with two hundred and seventy men, all but forty of whom were Green Mountain Boys, and many of them from Bennington, surprised the sentinel on duty, and, entering Fort Ticonderoga, ordered Captain Delaplace, the commandant, to surrender. "By whose authority?" demanded the astonished Delaplace.

Allen answered, "In the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress," and Delaplace was obliged to surrender the fort, with its cannon and military stores, to the Green Mountain Boys.

Ethan Allen was a brave soldier, but a very vain man; and it is said that at a thanksgiving service in the First Church at Bennington, after the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, the Rev. Jedediah Dewey made a prayer in which he gave to God all the glory of that capture, when Allen called out, in the midst of his prayer, "Parson Dewey! Parson Dewey! please mention to the Lord about my being there!"



Parson Dewey had been troubled before by Allen during divine service, for at one time when he was preaching on the character of God, and some remark displeased Allen, he arose in his pew and shouted, "It is not so!" and started to leave the church. But Mr. Dewey, who was equally bold and determined, pointed his finger at Allen and said, "Sit down, thou bold blasphemer, and listen to the Word of God!" Allen, who admired bravery, immediately sat down, and listened with respect to the remainder of the sermon.

While the men of the New Hampshire grants, under Ethan Allen, had shown by the capture of Fort Ticonderoga that they were willing to do all in their power for a common cause, yet they were not willing to act under the authority of New York, although they were now nominally under its jurisdiction.

So at a convention which met at Dorset, on January 15, 1777, "they unanimously voted for a separate and independent State," to which they gave the name of New Connecticut. This new State was rechristened Vermont at a convention which met at Windsor on June 4, 1777.

The affairs of the State were managed, for a

time, by a Council of Safety, with Thomas Chittenden as President, and which "assembled at Bennington in July, 1777, where it remained in permanent session throughout the year."

On July 6 Ticonderoga had fallen into the hands of the enemy, for it had been impossible to hold the fort against the superior army of Burgoyne.

"Sorrowfully the Green Mountain Boys relinquished, with almost as little bloodshed as two years before they had gained it, the fortress that guarded the frontier of their country."

Burgoyne continued to advance toward the Hudson, where, near Albany, he hoped to meet a part of the army of General Howe, and by uniting these forces the British expected to get the entire control of the State of New York and the Hudson River, thus cutting off New England — "the head of the rebellion" — from the other States.

Burgoyne had issued a proclamation, threatening ruin to all who should oppose him; and the thought that he would turn loose the Indian allies upon them created a panic among the settlers of Vermont.

The Council of Safety, now assembled at Bennington, called upon the officers of the militia to raise all the men possible for the defense of their territory.

Ira Allen, secretary of the Council, sent the alarming news to General Schuyler that Burgoyne was advancing along the western border of Vermont; but Schuyler declined "to notice a fourteenth State, unknown to the Confederacy," and sent only a part of a regiment under Colonel Simmons.

Allen wrote also to the Councils of Safety of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, urging them to come to their assistance in defending the western border of Vermont against Burgoyne.

New Hampshire sent back the cheering words that her militia was forming, and would march at once to their relief.

Stark's reply soon followed: "I am on the way with all the men I can muster."

Stark had received his orders from New Hampshire on July 22, while the New Hampshire militia were all in their homes; on August 7 he was at Manchester, and on the 9th he was at Bennington, with his own force and the men from Massachusetts, where he found the Vermont men organized and ready for action.

He encamped near the residence of Colonel Herick, where he remained for five days consulting with

Colonel Warner and the Council of Safety, who were awaiting the return of two scouts under their employ, to obtain positive information with regard to the plans of the enemy.

General Stark had received information that "the British had already left Castleton with an intent to march to Bennington;" for Burgoyne, wishing to provide his army with horses and provisions, had planned an expedition to that town, to seize the horses and stores which had been collected there.

This expedition was under the command of Baum, "a Brunswick lieutenant-colonel of dragoons, and composed of more than four hundred Brunswickers, Hanau artillerists with two cannon, the select corps of British marksmen, a party of French Canadians, a more numerous party of provincial royalists, and a horde of about one hundred and fifty Indians."

On August 14 Baum arrived at Sancoik, on a branch of the Walloomsac, where he took possession of a mill which had been abandoned by Colonel Gregg at the approach of a superior force.

On the morning of the 14th General Stark, who had received information that a large body of the enemy was approaching, sent word to the remnant of Colonel Warner's regiment at Manchester to

march at once to his assistance, then set forward with his brigade to meet the enemy.

After marching about five miles he was joined by Colonel Gregg, who was retreating from Sancoik closely followed by Baum.

Stark immediately drew up his "little army" in line of battle, and Baum halted his force on a hill, which gave him great advantage.

Stark skirmished for a short time, and killed and wounded thirty of the enemy without any loss on his own side, then marched back about two miles, where he found a better position.

"His force consisted of three regiments of New Hampshire militia, a small body of militia from the east side of the mountain, under Colonel Williams, from Wilmington; a corps of rangers, formed under the authority of the Vermont Council of Safety, commanded by Colonel Herrick; a body of militia from Bennington and its vicinity, Nathaniel Brush, colonel, of which there were two companies from Bennington, the one commanded by Captain Samuel Robinson, and the other by Captain Elijah Dewey; and a part of a militia regiment from Berkshire County, under Colonel Simmons, making his whole force amount to about eighteen hundred men."

On the 15th it rained in torrents, so Stark decided not to attack the enemy until the next day, although he, with his officers and the Council of Safety, had, the day before, made plans of attack which were "afterward carried out with remarkable completeness."

The morning of the 16th dawned in such splendor that one of Baum's German officers was so impressed with the day and his surroundings that he wrote the following beautiful description : —

"The storm of the preceding day having expended itself, not a cloud was left to darken the heavens, while the very leaves hung motionless, and the long grass waved not, under the influence of a perfect calm. The fields looked green and refreshed, the river was swollen and tumultuous, and the branches were all loaded with dewdrops, which glistened in the sun's early rays like so many diamonds. Nor would it be possible to imagine any scene more rife with peaceful and pastoral beauty."

Early in the day, Colonel Nichols with two hundred men had, by making a wide circuit through the woods, succeeded in getting at the north of Baum's position, in the rear of his left wing, while Colonel Herrick with three hundred men went southward



and secured a position in the rear of his right wing.

Baum seeing these men in small bands, and carrying fowling-pieces without bayonets, stealing behind his intrenchments, thought they were friendly Tories coming to his assistance, and so Stark was enabled to mass about five hundred men in Baum's rear. He then arrested Baum's attention by a feint and moved two hundred more men to his right, and with the remainder of his force took the front and ordered a general assault.

"At three o'clock in the afternoon Baum was attacked on every side. The Indians dashed between two detachments and fled, leaving their grand chief and others on the field. New England sharpshooters ran up within eight yards of the loaded cannon to pick off the cannoneers." The fight was a very hot one, "the hottest I ever saw in my life," wrote Stark to General Gates. "Had each man been an Alexander or a Charles of Sweden, he could not have behaved more gallantly."

"When, after about two hours, the firing of the Brunswickers slackened from scarcity of powder, the Americans scaled the breastwork and fought them hand to hand. Baum ordered his infantry with the

bayonet, his dragoons with their sabres, to force a way ; but he fell mortally wounded," and his troops were obliged to surrender. But only just in time, for soon came the alarming news that another British force was advancing, the German veterans under Breyman.

The Americans were hardly in a condition to meet this fresh foe, and Stark was about to give the order to retreat, when Warner, urging him to stand his ground, shouted to the men, "Stand to it, my lads ! you shall have help immediately."

This brave officer so encouraged Stark that, although worn out and jaded from his first fierce engagement, he collected his scattered forces, and once more faced the enemy.

"Breyman opened an incessant fire from his artillery and small-arms, which was for a while returned by the Americans with much spirit ; but exhausted by fatigue and hunger, and overpowered by numbers, they at length began slowly, but in order, to retreat before the enemy, disputing the ground inch by inch."

But fortunately the remnant of Warner's regiment from Manchester just then arrived, and hastened to give most timely aid. Not enough praise



has been accorded to that brave band of men under Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Safford, one of Bennington's early settlers, who marched that rainy night to Bennington, arriving on the field of battle the next day, just in time to bring the much-needed assistance to Stark's tired army, where, fighting by Stark's side, was their own beloved colonel, Warner, a Bennington man, and one so esteemed by every Bennington boy that they would have followed him to the very cannon's mouth.

Safford and his men fought with great spirit, "being determined," said Allen, "to have ample revenge on account of the quarrel at Hubbardton."

The enemy was now brought to a stand, and although the day had been nearly lost, yet it was largely owing to the brave Warner and the Bennington boys that the victory was ours.

"The combat was maintained with great bravery on both sides till sunset, when the enemy gave way, and were pursued till dark. With one more hour of daylight, says Stark in his official report, he should have captured their whole force."

A messenger was sent at once to Bennington to announce the result of the battle, and as he rode

swiftly through the street, he shouted the joyful news, "Victory is ours! victory is ours!"

Great must have been the rejoicing at the Cata-mountain Tavern, where the Council of Safety had remained all day in their "low-browed chamber," to hear at last the good tidings that the "God of the hills" had indeed given them the victory.

The brave landlord, Stephen Fay, when told that his oldest son, John, was among the slain, said, "I thank God I had a son willing to give his life for his country."

We can also imagine the joy of those brave Bennington women who had seen husbands and sons march through their beautiful street, on the way to stop the advance of an enemy whose presence meant death and destruction to all that was dear to them.

The wife of our pioneer settler, Marcy Robinson, saw her second son, Samuel, march as captain of one of the two Bennington companies, and three of her other sons march with him. One of these, her oldest son, Leonard, whose aim was quick and deadly, said after the battle: "Every time I shot I saw a man fall, but I prayed the Lord to have mercy on his soul, and then I took care of his body."

She also saw the husband of her oldest daughter, Marcy, Lieutenant Joseph Safford, under the command of his brother, march to the bold Warner's relief. Benjamin Fay, the husband of her second daughter, Sarah, was also in the Bennington battle.

Her third son, Moses, was the first colonel of militia in the State, and had distinguished himself at Ticonderoga in 1776, and had received at that time a letter of commendation from General Gates, which is now in the possession of his granddaughter, Mrs. Edward Swift. But his regiment had been disbanded, and at this time he was one of the most able men in the Council of Safety, where his services were more needed than on the field.

His wife Mary, the daughter of Landlord Fay, filled with the same patriotic spirit as her father and brothers, baked bread all day for Stark's "little army" in her brick oven at the Governor Robinson farm; while her young son Aaron, then only nine years of age, cut all the wood necessary for use.

On Harwood hill the women gathered with their children in the woods, and while the battle was raging in their hearing, spent the day in prayer. One of those little boys, at that time five years of

age, the grandfather of the Rev. James Harwood, always believed, even in his old age, that "the victory which came that day, and that turned the tide of American affairs, was due more to the forces controlled by that band of praying ones than to those that marched out into the field. At eighty-five years of age, and in full possession of his powers, the old man used to close his recital of that decisive day with the repetition of the 124th Psalm : " —

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ;

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us ;

"Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us."

## OUR OLD HOMES

How fascinating those homes always were to me, even as a child ! I can remember how often, with our dolls in our arms, my little cousin Sarah and myself wandered up and down our village street, wishing that we might be permitted to enter some of those attractive old places.

The homes were made more exclusive in those days by the high fences which inclosed their grounds ; and I remember standing by a gate at the Catamount Tavern one beautiful afternoon in summer, and looking with longing eyes at that historic house, when suddenly I saw a sweet-faced old lady in the doorway, who beckoned me to enter. We most joyfully obeyed, and when she questioned me whose little girl I was, and I had told her, she did not say like so many others, " Oh, you are Dan's child," which I always resented as not respectful to my father ; for I could not then understand that he was still the boy Dan to his village friends.

She told me, however, that she was my cousin Ruth, and, after talking pleasantly awhile, gave us permission to go into the garden and gather gooseberries ; no others eaten since have ever tasted quite the same. I never saw that dear old lady again, but she will never be forgotten by the little child whom she made so happy on that summer afternoon.

On the corner south of the Catamount Tavern, and next to the court-house, stood the old house where Ethan Allen once lived. It was occupied when I was a child by Mrs. Truman Squier. It was a large double house, with a hall which ran its entire length, and opened into a beautiful old garden. This place was especially attractive to us, for flowers and shrubs which we had never seen before grew there in wild luxuriance, and beyond the flowers were fruit trees of many kinds, with grapevines twining high up in their branches. We were never happier than when we were permitted to wander in this old-time garden.

Probably the oldest among our homes is the white house with green blinds, so sunny and pleasant, which stands two doors south of the First Church, and is now the residence of Mrs. Edward



Swift. It was built in 1763 by the Rev. Jedediah Dewey, first pastor of Vermont. He was a true patriot, and preached a famous war sermon to his people the Sunday before the Bennington battle was fought and won.

One door south of Mr. Charles Sanford's residence stood another of our old homes, which was built by Captain John Fasset in 1779.

Mr. Fasset was chosen captain of the first military company in Bennington in October, 1764. It was his lovely daughter Mary that Judge Jonathan Robinson wooed and married; and to judge from the tenderness and love manifested in his letters to her, found laid away in an old trunk in our attic at home, theirs must have been a lifelong attachment. She was a woman of rare loveliness of character, and her goodness made such an impression on the childish mind of my father that I have heard him tell the story that when he was a very little boy, and was frightened in a severe thunder-storm, he would get behind her high wooden rocker, in which she always sat, and, with his little hands on the chair, felt sure that he would be saved, because he was near so good a woman as his grandmother.

The old wooden rocker always had a place of



honor in his home, and is still carefully preserved by his family.

Captain Fasset died on August 12, 1794, and later his house became the home of the Rev. Job Swift, who was the pastor of the First Church for nine years. He was a graduate of Yale College, and received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Williams College. Doctor Swift was a man highly esteemed by his congregation, and one whose advice was much sought after in all ecclesiastical councils. "Good men loved him, and delighted in his society, and the worst men acknowledged his worth." At his death he was known as the "Apostle of Vermont." Two of his sons, Noadiah and Heman, were leading physicians here in town for many years.

About a mile south of the house of Captain John Fasset stands the old home, built in 1769, by Peter Harwood, one of the first settlers of Bennington. His son Benjamin was the first male child born in Bennington, and it is from a diary which he kept, and his son Hiram continued, that we have taken the dates of our old homes. The first apple-tree in town was planted by Peter Harwood, near his house, where it lived and flourished for 109 years. Many

relics have been turned from the wood of this tree and given away, to be carefully preserved by friends who were interested in the old home, near where it had stood for more than a century.

On Mt. Anthony Street, west of the Walloomsac Inn, stands the Governor Tichenor house, built in 1792. Governor Tichenor first came to town on August 14, 1777, being "Deputy Commissary-General of purchases for the Northern Department." He was educated at Princeton College, and after the war received one office of honor after another, until he was elected governor of the State in 1797, which office he filled for eleven years. There is a portrait of the governor, which may be seen in this old home; he was described as a gentleman of the old school, of graceful manner and address.

The nails used in building his house were cut in Bennington from hoops taken from imported liquor casks. In the hall of the second story still hangs a memorial wall-paper manufactured at the time of Washington's death in 1799. In the same hall is kept a handsome silk banner, decorated on both sides, and ornamented with silk fringe and tassels. This banner was presented to Governor Tichenor by the Washingtonian Society, of which he was a mem-

ber. Another interesting relic in this house is the Washington pitcher, manufactured in France. The medallion of Washington on this pitcher is said to be a perfect likeness of our great Commander-in-Chief.

About half a mile from the Tichenor place, and opposite the handsome residence built by Mr. Hubbell Conkling, who died so suddenly abroad, stands the old home, built in 1769, of Aaron Hubbell, Esquire. He was twenty years of age at the time of the Bennington battle, and a member of Captain Samuel Robinson's company of militia. On August 14 he marched with his company as far as the Henry place, where they halted and were ordered to fell trees to stop the artillery of the enemy, and he was the first soldier to bring down a tree. After the first successful engagement, on August 16, he was appointed one of the guards to take the prisoners captured at that time to Bennington, where they were confined in the First Church. This building was erected about 1764, and was smaller than our present edifice, and stood in the centre of the Green, nearly opposite the Walloomsac Inn.

In 1782 Mr. Hubbell was married to Sarah Dewey, daughter of Captain Elijah Dewey, and

granddaughter of Jedediah Dewey, first pastor of the church on the Hill.

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They had a large family of children, who intermarried with the leading families in town. This old home became in time the gathering-place of this large family and their descendants, until finally even the great-grandchildren were gathered within its hospitable walls, where they always received a hearty welcome, and looked with wondering eyes when they were shown the bullet-hole in the old kitchen door, made by a wandering Hessian on the day of the Bennington battle. If those old walls could speak, how many stories they could tell of love and grief; how, in the "west parlor," many a beautiful bride stood and heard the solemn words that were to send her far from the home she loved!

Mr. Hubbell's second wife, the great-grandmother that we remember, was a dear old lady, very bright and entertaining in conversation, and who dearly loved both grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The writer remembers how lovely she looked when she quietly slipped those delicious pink and white peppermint-drops into her warm hands, during service, on a close Sunday in summer, and how her thoughtful kindness shortened those long and weary hours.

The familiar faces of those who always gave us such loving welcome have long since left us, but their kindness and hospitality will never be forgotten, nor the pleasant hours which we have so often passed in that dearest of our old homes.

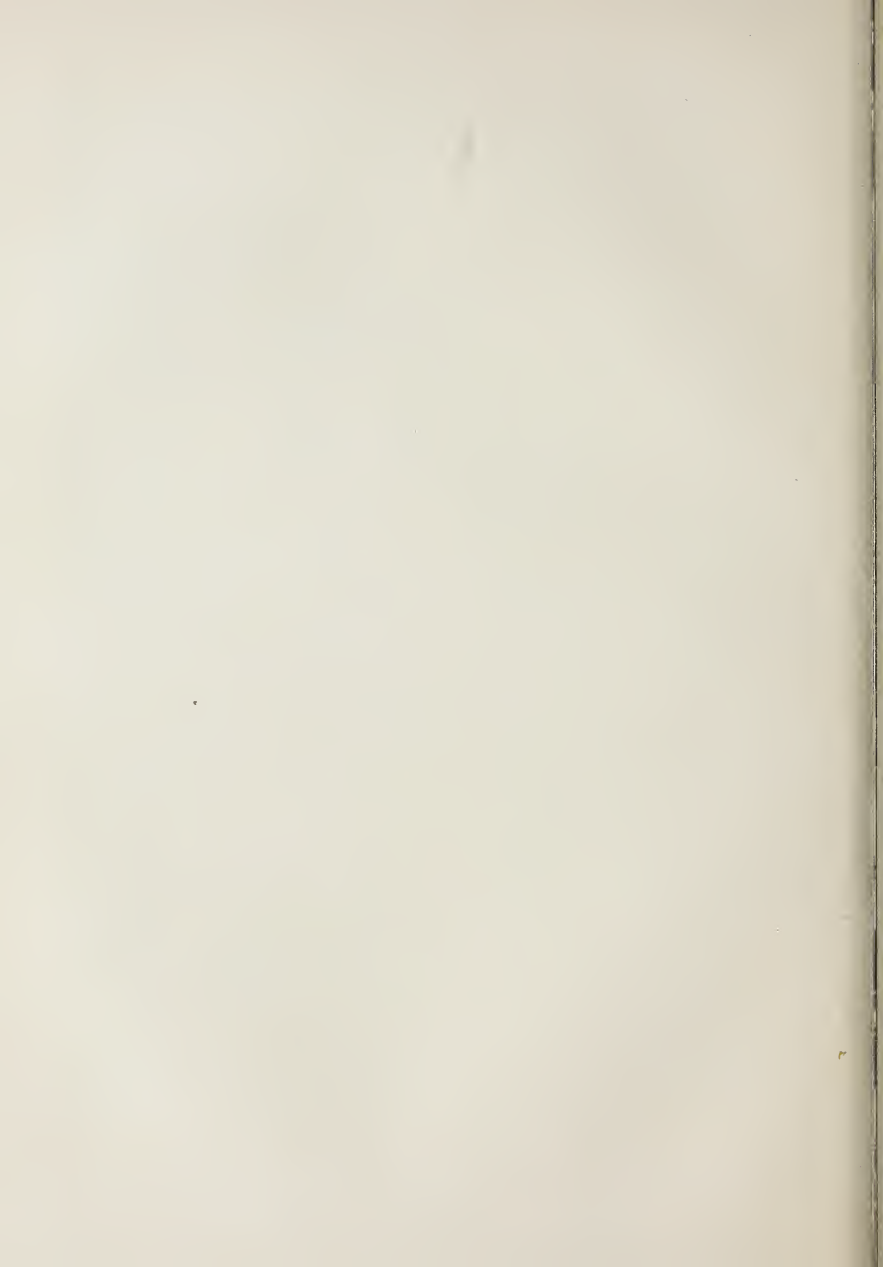
At the top of the Academy hill, and opposite the spot where once stood his father's log cabin, stands the only one of the old Robinson homes which has not been destroyed by fire or negligence. It was built by David Robinson in 1795, who was only seven years of age at the time of the Bennington settlement. He was in the battle of Bennington as a private in his brother's company of militia, and afterward rose, by regular promotion, to the rank of major-general. General Robinson was a man renowned for his courage, and respected by the entire community.

In this home, filled with many relics of great historical value, lived for many years Mr. George Wadsworth Robinson, a man who did more to create an interest in historic matters connected with this town than any other resident. Affable and courteous in his manners, a true gentleman of the old school, he was always ready to share with strangers his valuable store of information, and at





THE OLD HOME OF GENERAL DAVID ROBINSON





his death old "Bennington on the Hill" lost one of her most faithful and devoted friends.

The white house on the corner, near the Battle Monument, now occupied as a parsonage, was the home of Captain David Robinson, General Robinson's oldest son. The writer can remember how he used to come and call on her grandfather Sunday afternoons, wrapped in a long military cloak with a red lining.

Captain David owned a large field opposite the house of Mr. Isaac Robinson, in the centre of which was a beautiful mound, and the story has often been told that, when Captain David lost his first wife, for a time he was inconsolable, nor could he bear the thought of having his dear one put under ground; so he built this mound, under which he placed the coffin of his wife, where day after day he went and wept most bitterly. But when a young and pretty widow came into town, he fell a sudden victim to her charms, and Betsey was laid peacefully at rest in our village churchyard, and the charming widow soon became his bride.

This house, however, is more distinctly remembered as the home of Mr. Isaac Jennings, who was for so long the beloved pastor of the First Church.

Never was a pastor more trusted by a congregation ; and every little child in the church knew him and loved him. He was a man very modest and retiring in his demeanor, but one who could see the ludicrous as well as the grave side of any subject.

He once told the writer that he was appointed by a committee to visit a neighboring hamlet and pray with the farmers and their families. He arrived one warm morning in summer in front of a farmhouse, and asked the mother of the family if she and her husband would like to have him pray with them ? She replied that her husband was at work in the field, but she would send for him. He arrived presently and stood in front of Mr. Jennings, twirling his hat between his fingers, heated and tired. "My friend, would you like to have me pray with you ?" asked Mr. Jennings. "I would as soon not as tew," said the farmer. This reply was certainly not courteous or encouraging, but Mr. Jennings accepted it with Christian charity, and was extremely amused by the man's simple honesty.

It was a great privilege to see the beautiful life which he lived so long among his people.

He had adopted certain rules, which he daily observed, and which were as follows : —

“(1.) To hear as little as possible to the prejudice of others.

“(2.) To believe nothing of the kind until I am absolutely forced to it.

“(3.) Never to drink in the spirit of one who circulates an ill report.

“(4.) Always to moderate, as far as I can, the unkindness which is expressed towards others.

“(5.) Always believe that, if the other side were heard, a very different account would be given of the matter.”

We truly believe that the universal adoption of these rules would be the greatest blessing, and would make the world much better.

A short time ago we came across the following passage, which attracted us by the rare beauty of its thought:—

“We are told by the marines who sail on the Indian Seas that many times they are able to tell their approach to certain islands, long before they can see them, by the sweet fragrance of the sandal-wood that is wafted far out upon the deep. Do you not see how it would serve to have such a soul playing through such a body that, as you go here

and there, a subtle, silent force goes out from you that all feel and are influenced by; so that you carry with you an inspiration and continually shed a benediction wherever you go; so that your friends and all people will say, — His coming brings peace and joy into our homes?" As we read those words, so inspiring and helpful, we wondered if, among the many we knew, there might be just one worthy of this description, when suddenly our thoughts went back to our honored pastor, whose "smile was a benediction;" and when we thought of that beautiful life, we no longer wondered.

## THE HISTORIC WALLOOMSAC

THE historic Walloomsac, as it glides slowly and then swiftly through the east part of Bennington, is only one among the many little rivers which every New England boy in his own home has learned to love. But to the Bennington boy, although many delightful hours are associated with this beautiful stream, yet the historic association makes it doubly dear, for on its banks that glorious 16th of August was fought the battle which brought honor and victory to our brave Bennington men.

Its name, Walloomsac, originated from a Dutch word, Wallumschaik, the termination "chaik" signifying scip or patent; the whole word meaning Wallum's patent, the name of a grant of several acres of land in Bennington, alleged to have been granted by New York about ten years before the charter under New Hampshire. The grant bore the date June 15, 1739.

On its banks, a short distance from where it

issues from Safford's Pond, stands the house of Mr. William Morgan, built by his great-grandfather, Colonel Samuel Safford, of Revolutionary fame. It contains many relics of great value, and is one of the few houses of Revolutionary days which has been carefully preserved. On the walls of its sunny library hangs, framed, a letter from General Washington to Colonel Safford, which is highly treasured by his descendants living in this old home, one of the most attractive in our town.

Below the Soldiers' Home are three bridges, whose names are associated with favorite localities of ours in our younger days. They were in close proximity to each other, and were called "Meach Hole," "Governor Robinson," and "Old Red" Bridge. From the dam near the Bennington and Rutland Railway passenger station, the river winds through the lower part of the village down past the mammoth woolen mill of John S. Holden & Co., and thence through a most picturesque part of the town, until the highway leading to North Bennington is reached. Here, in the olden time, the stream was bridged by an open wooden structure, unpainted, and called the "Meach Hole Bridge." A few feet away, the Roaring Branch



comes in ; and this meeting-place of the waters was once a famous fishing-ground, some of the largest trout ever caught in the river having been taken from this spot. At this point the river takes a westerly course ; and but a few yards distant the highway is again bridged, this time by a covered structure painted red, and called the "Governor Robinson Bridge." Inseparably connected with this bridge, and just below where the river bends, are the rocks, once a favorite spot for swimmers, the water being quite deep here, and the high, rocky embankment a good place from which to dive. Nowadays the place is little frequented.

On the hillside overlooking the river, and where now stands the residence of the late Frederick G. Clark, D. D., once stood the Governor Robinson mansion, a large brick building with a gable roof. Into this house was brought the first foreign carpet in town. It had a black ground, with great bunches of gay-colored flowers tied with blue ribbons, and the paper on the parlor walls matched the carpet. A long broad hall ran through the house east and west. In the old square rooms that opened from this hall were wont to gather the society people of the olden time. It was here that Governor Moses



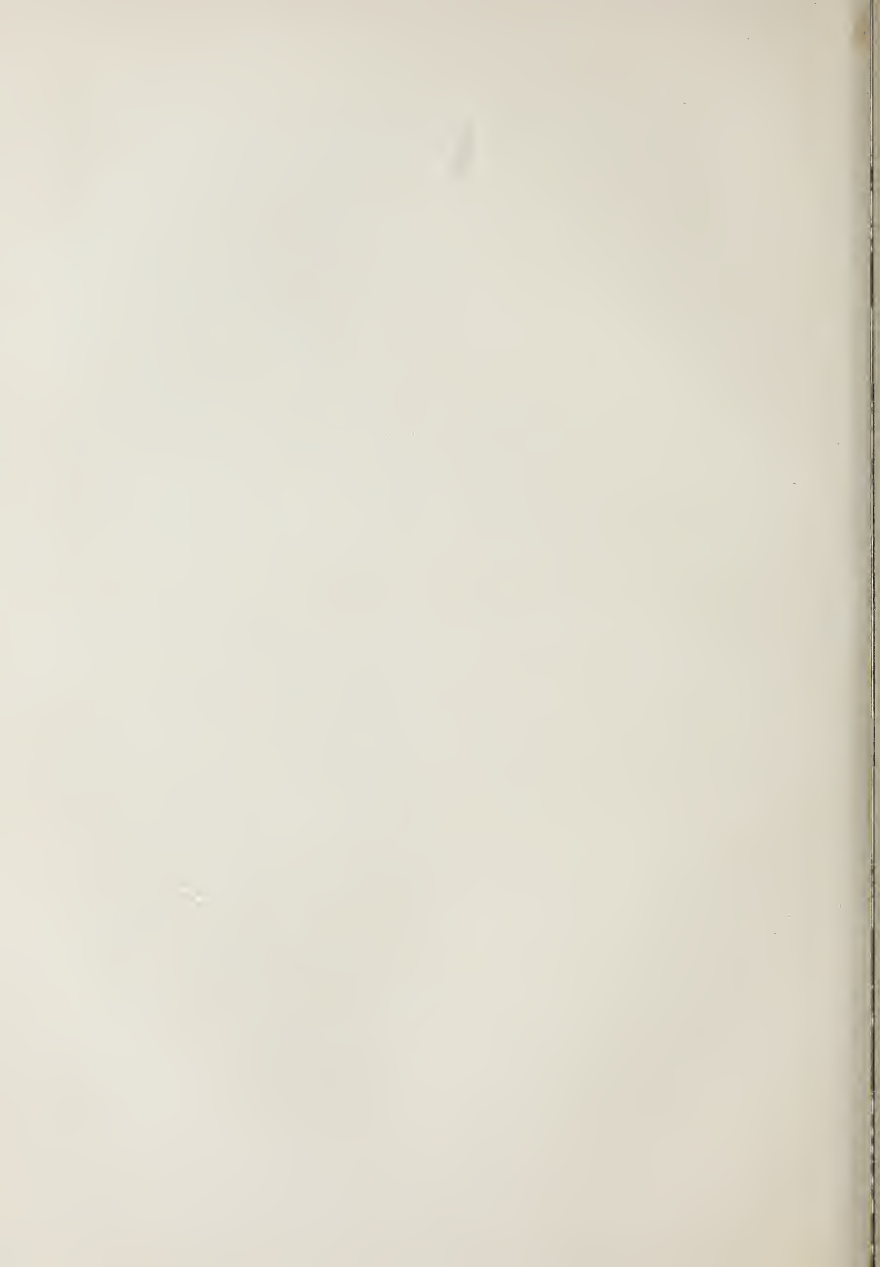
Robinson entertained two of our Presidents, — Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. They remained with him over the Sabbath; and there is a tradition that he was very anxious the day might be pleasant, that his two distinguished visitors might accompany him to church.

A half mile or so below its neighbors, already mentioned, stands the "Old Red Bridge." Its location is a charming one in summer, and in our younger days it was a favorite place of resort, particularly on Saturday afternoons. The steep north hill leads down to it. Its architecture is of the conventional style of bridges of the olden time. It has a shingled roof, and its sides are clapboarded; but diamond-shaped holes at intervals, formed by its cross-timbers, permit the sunlight to enter, making cheerful its long passageway.

The locality is an isolated one; and we remember how forbidding its dark portal looked as we approached it just as the night set in, and how oppressive seemed the stillness of the surroundings, unbroken save by the muffled sound of hoof and wheel as we passed over the plank flooring, and the noise of the rushing waters under it. There has always been something about this bridge and



THE OLD RED BRIDGE



locality especially fascinating to us; and we rarely miss an opportunity to look upon a scene so pleasantly associated with our boyhood. About a mile below the "Old Red Bridge," on the Walloomsac, stood the old home of Samuel Robinson, captain of one of the two companies of Bennington men in Stark's "little army." It was he who "guarded the house where Baum lingered in his last hours, and watched gently with him as a woman till he died;" and he often stated that "he had never seen a more intelligent and brave officer than this unfortunate lieutenant." His house was of red brick, with a gable roof, and was known for many years as the "Safford Robinson Place," as it was occupied after his father's death by his son Safford, named in honor of his mother's family. This old home was destroyed by fire a number of years ago.

A mile below this house, on the banks of the Walloomsac, is the old home of another Revolutionary hero, General Ebenezer Walbridge, built by him in 1786. He first came to Bennington in 1765. He was an officer in Colonel Warner's regiment of Green Mountain Boys in the winter campaign of 1776 in Canada. He served as adjutant in the Bennington battle, and in 1780 succeeded

Colonel Herrick in the command of the Bennington regiment, and afterward became brigadier-general. The Walbridge genealogy is traced back to Suffolk County, England. On a copy of the coat-of-arms of the Suffolk Walbridges are certain armorial bearings to show that "Sir William de Walbridge accompanied King Richard Cœur de Lion to the Holy Land in the fourth crusade, and there greatly distinguished himself." This old home is very attractive, with large, cheerful rooms on both sides of its broad hall, and contains many relics of great interest. A reception was given there on July 27, 1897, in honor of the one hundredth birthday of Mrs. Sophia Walbridge Winnie, the daughter of Stebbins Walbridge, and granddaughter of General Walbridge. The house was decorated with old-fashioned flowers, and looked very inviting. Mrs. Winnie received her guests with great dignity, assisted by her attractive grandniece, Miss Harriet Walbridge. The guests were each presented with a new cent, which they will long preserve to commemorate such an eventful occasion.

Once a main highway running north and south led straight through the "Old Red Bridge" over the hill where now stands the Battle Monument. Just

below this spot, south, once stood the old home of Governor John S. Robinson, who at one time had his law-office in one of the east rooms, where we have watched the dry logs in the old fireplace as they crackled, sending their sparks high up the big chimney. The governor was a delegate to the Convention held in Charleston just before the war. He died there, and his remains were brought to Bennington and buried with imposing ceremonies. Lyman Patchin, generally called Squire Patchin, kept the brick store across the street from Governor Robinson's house, a little farther up. The broad front steps of the store were a popular gathering-place for gentlemen in those summer days, when old Bennington was a business centre. There comes to our mind, as we write, a building, historic in its character, that stood west of Squire Patchin's store. It was of a light yellow color; and painted on its front in large letters were the words "State Arms," so called because it stood near the site of the old Continental Store-House, where were kept those fabulous stores in Revolutionary days. It was built by Jonathan Robinson in 1780, and was one of the most flourishing taverns in Bennington's early history.



Many practical jokes had their origin in the bar-room of this old tavern. The story is told of a man in the neighborhood who always knew when a barrel of sweet cider was carried into the cellar of the State Arms, and who made himself a nuisance by hanging around until they gave him a drink. A young man in the tavern determined to stop this if possible, so procured a mask, inside of which he fastened a candle. A string was then attached to the mask, and it was ready for use. The new barrel of cider was placed directly under the trap-door in the bar-room, and when the offender made his appearance, he was asked if he would like a drink of sweet cider. He was then given a pitcher and told to go downstairs and fill it. They gave him sufficient time to turn the faucet, and then quietly let down the mask, with the candle lighted, until it rested on top of the cider-barrel. They soon heard a most terrible shriek; then the man rushed up the stairs, white as a sheet, and, gasping from fright, said: "Your cider is running all over the cellar floor, and the Devil is sitting on the cider-barrel!" It is needless to say that his cure was complete.

A club of wild young men, called the Cognac



Club, used to gather here, and one of its members, for a wager, is said to have ridden his spirited young horse up the broad stairway and into the ball-room. Later, this tavern was used as a private dwelling, having been thoroughly overhauled for that purpose. It was, we regret, taken down, together with other buildings, when the erection of the Battle Monument was assured.

Adjoining the State Arms, on the north, stood a brick building with a gable roof, occupied by an old-time Congressman. It was a pleasant place to visit, and our life was closely interwoven with those that made this home so attractive. Its walls might have told the story of a most touching romance, in which true love never wavered, and which lasted nearly forty years.

An old-fashioned garden was a feature of the place, just such a garden as one reads about, but rarely sees nowadays, — one where the grapevines twined about the trees until the trunks were covered. We also remember the garden as prolific in fruits and flowers. The flowers seemed to be in endless variety, and their coloring has increased in brightness, and their fragrance in strength, as the long years have passed ; likewise with the fruit.

How tempting looked the long-necked pears as they hung in bunches, bending low the branches; and how delicious seemed the German Bow apples, and the big Harvest Sweets, so ripe that they split open as they fell upon the ground! Plums grew in that garden of all sizes and colors, from the small sweet sugar-plum to the large red and white egg-plums.

Time has wrought many changes in our circle, but nowhere so marked as around this spot. The tenants of that home have long since left it. Where once it stood, with its old-fashioned garden, a broad lawn now slopes; but from the hillside near it we look at the same rare landscape; and, as we turn our steps homeward, our eyes rest upon the "Old Red Bridge," unchanged, still spanning the river at the foot of the steep north hill.

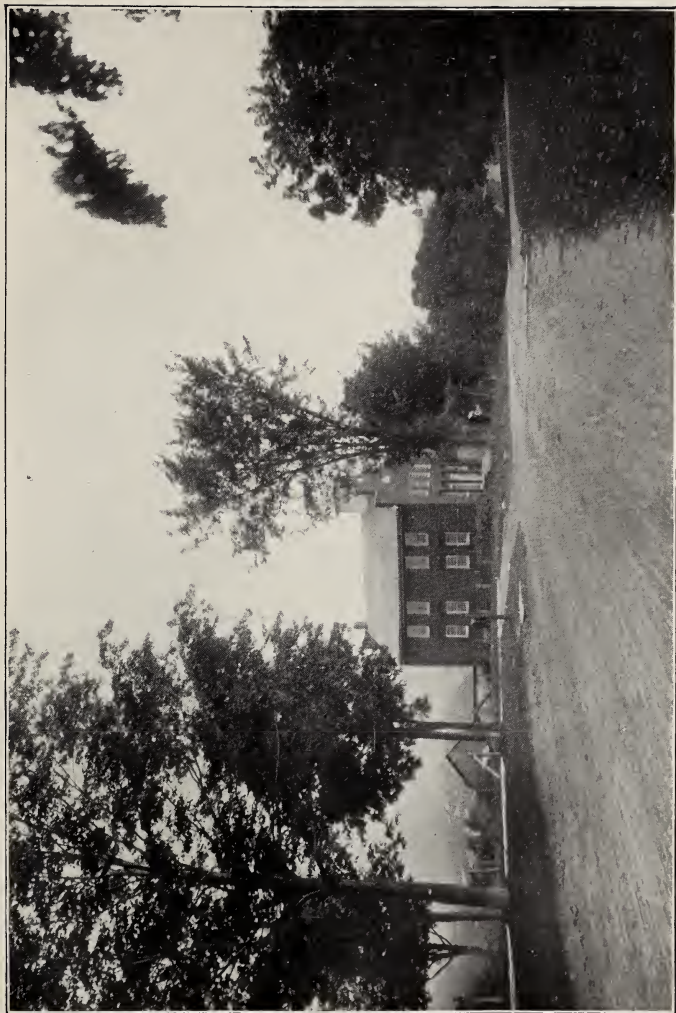
## THE BRICK ACADEMY

OFTEN have we been questioned concerning the brick structure, with a white steeple, standing on the east side of the street, midway between the church and Battle Monument, and have invariably replied that it was the old academy where our fathers and mothers went to school. High up, and imbedded in its red brick front, is a small slab that tells the passer-by when it was erected.

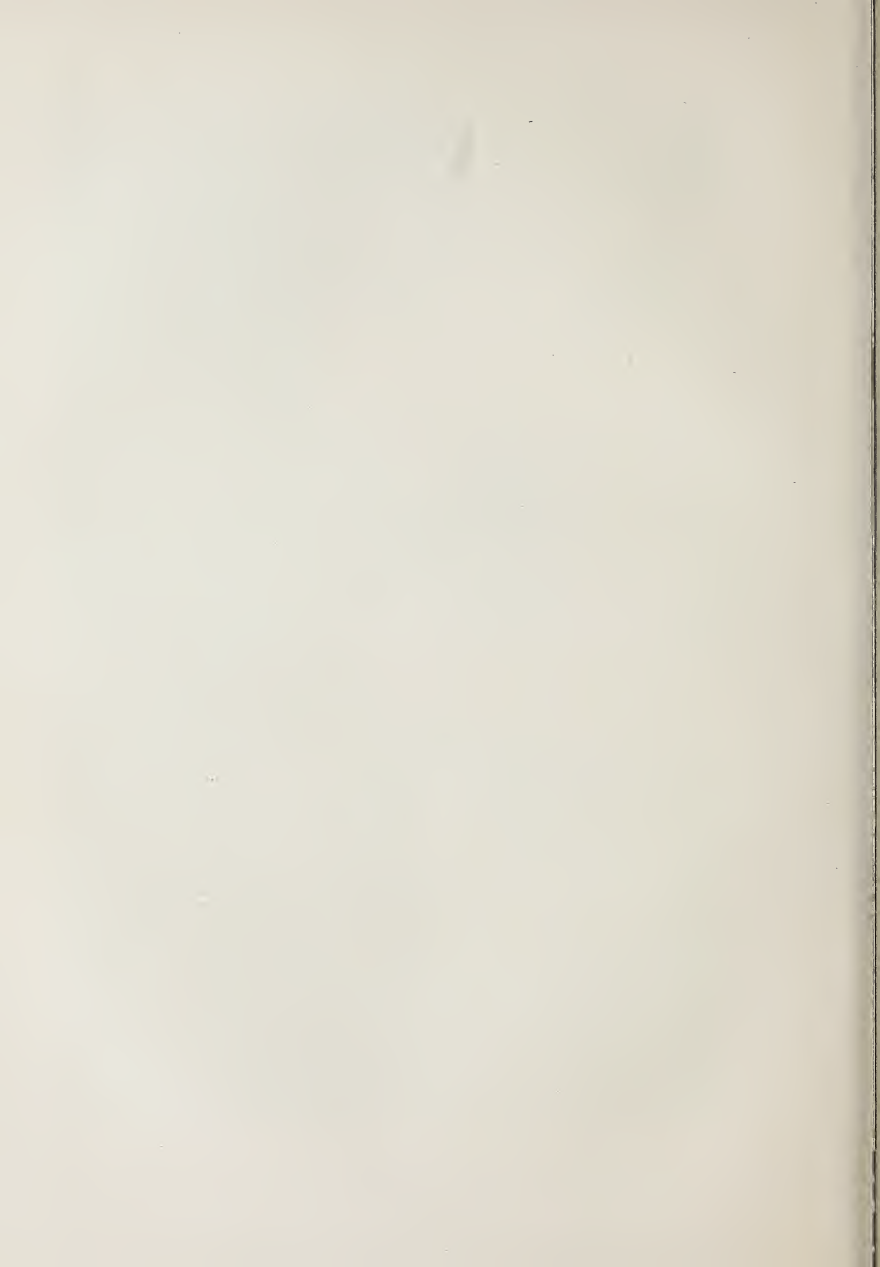
In a letter from Isaac Robinson to his brother, Jonathan E., in New York, dated November 5, 1821, he writes: "Our academy is about finished; it is the best building in the county, fire-proof, and will be an honor to the town." In the diary of Hiram Harwood, dated December 13, the same year, we read: "A southeast storm overturned the steeple of the new academy." This was a great disappointment to the people of Bennington, and it is said that the building remained without a steeple for a whole year. In earlier days it was considered an honor here in Bennington for boys to be chosen to

watch in the belfry of the old academy until midnight, when they were to ring the bell which was to be the signal for the Fourth of July celebration to begin. Dr. Charles Seymour Robinson, once a Bennington boy, has given a most vivid description of a boy's feelings while watching in the old belfry : —

“ You get hungry, and you get sleepy, and you get superstitious, and you get shivering, before you know it. But do you suppose anybody is going to give in, for all that? You cuddle down beside the timbers; you crowd up close together; you hear the spirit-like whirr of the night-birds as they hurry by the spire; you listen comfortably to the far-away baying of a house-dog. Then you begin to wonder what time it is. Somebody has a watch, or somebody has borrowed one. You stand up to shake yourself a little; you peer over the balustrade into the awful depths beneath; you start the question whether any fellow could live if he fell down to the sidewalk; somebody knows of an instance of such a thing which occurred somewhere, and that stirs up the horror and suggests impressively that you sit down again with your back to a beam.



THE BRICK ACADEMY





“Then the grand shadows of the latest hours you ever knew since you were alive hang heavily overhead, and you look to see what time it is. The stars march right on through the fleecy clouds, as you imagine the Continental soldiers must have marched through the ranks of the old British in the Revolution. And the deep sky is wonderfully blue, and perhaps the weird northern lights stream across the zenith, or flashes of heat-lightning play low on the horizon. Down below you slumbers the unsuspecting village; and then you wonder what time it is; and so the beautiful, solemn night passes on.”

Bleak winds have whistled through the belfry of the old academy, and the snows of many an old-time New England winter have drifted at its base, since first its doors were opened as an institution of learning, and our fathers and mothers went there to school.

It was not, however, the first institution of this kind erected in Bennington. Our first schoolhouse stood not far from the house of Mr. Charles Swift, and was built of tamarack logs obtained in the swamp near by.

In 1780 Clio Hall was established, and was the



first incorporated academy in the State. It stood on the corner where the First Church now stands, and a part of its foundation may still be seen in the cellar of that church. It was a flourishing school for a long time, when unfortunately it was destroyed by fire in 1803.

The people living below the hill missed having a school at that end of the town; so, when Mt. Anthony Seminary was established in 1829, there was great rejoicing in that district. But the children who were obliged to attend the "Pioneer," as the new school was called, received very often quite rough treatment from the boys of the "Old Line" (the academy), who considered their school was not treated with proper respect when it was passed by to attend the Mt. Anthony Seminary further down. Its peculiar-sounding bell has often awakened us, as well as our patriotism, during the night preceding the celebration of the Sixteenth of August. On its steps, at one of these celebrations in 1837, stood the late Rev. E. H. Chapin, then a young man about twenty years of age, and recited the following poem, which he had written in honor of the day:—

## BENNINGTON BATTLE.

They came up at the battle's sound,  
Stern, iron-hearted men;  
They heard it as it thrilled along  
The stream-side and the glen :  
The dim old mountains echoed back  
That summons wild and strong,  
And the far greenwood depths were stirred  
As with a triumph song.

They came, as brave men ever come,  
To stand, to fight, to die ;  
No thought of fear was in the heart,  
No quailing in the eye;  
If the lip faltered, 't was with prayer,  
Amid those gathering bands,  
For the sure rifle kept its poise  
In strong, untrembling hands.

They came up at the battle sound  
To old Walloomsac height;  
Behind them were their fields of toil,  
With harvest promise white;  
Before them those that sought to wrest  
Their hallowed birthright dear;  
While through their ranks went fearlessly  
Their leader's words of cheer: —

“My men, there are our freedom's foe,  
And shall they stand or fall ?  
Ye have your weapons in your hands,  
Ye know your duty all.

For see, this day we triumph o'er  
The minions of the crown,  
Or Molly Stark's a widowed one  
Ere yonder sun goes down."

One thought of Heaven, one thought of home,  
One thought of hearth and shrine,  
Then rock-like stood they in their might  
Before the glittering line.  
A moment, and each keen eye paused,  
The coming foe to mark,  
Then downward to his barrel glanced,  
And strife was wild and dark.

'Tis sixty years ago, and where —  
Ay, where — are those brave yeomen now ?  
The clods are heavy on the breast,  
And dust is on the brow.  
A few still linger with dimmed eyes,  
And time-bleached locks of gray,  
But they are passing one by one  
To their deep rest away.

The triumphs of that conflict hour  
With them will not depart;  
The memory of that old red field  
Is fresh within the heart.  
'T will live on every mountain-side,  
'T will breathe in every glen,  
And linger by the sepulchre  
Where sleep those mighty men.

It needs no monumental pile  
To tell each storied name;

The fair green hills rise proudly up  
To consecrate their fame.  
True to its trust, Walloomsac long  
The record bright shall bear,  
Who came up at the battle sound  
And fought for freedom there.

Dr. Chapin afterwards became one of the most popular of lecturers, and used to say that "he lectured for F. A. M. E.," which he laughingly explained, for "fifty and my expenses."

In after years, when the Mt. Anthony Seminary gained in popularity, only the lower room of the old academy was used for school purposes, and in the upper room were held the prayer-meetings of the First Church. Many who first learned to read in the lower room were heard later in life in the services of the upper one; but they have passed on to that upper sphere towards which we are all fast journeying. Singing-schools and choir rehearsals were also held here, and how enjoyable they were; for the genial chorister, John Fay, had a happy way of diversifying his instruction with witty remarks, and an evening with him always passed quickly. His pleasant face is often in our mind, and we can hardly realize that nearly one third of a century has passed since he left us in the prime of life on that far-away winter's day.

The ravages of time and climatic changes weakened the once firmly laid foundation of the academy, and for a time it was not considered safe for occupancy. As the building was erected for educational purposes, to further its use in that line some of our ladies conceived the idea of utilizing part of it for a public library. With this end in view, the work of repairing it was begun under the supervision of these ladies, and, as a result of their efforts, the structure has been made secure (1897). The lower room has been substantially fitted up for library purposes; and its pretty furnishings, together with rare views seen from its windows, make it a most attractive gathering-place. The basement, where was once kept the old hand fire-engine, Ethan Allen, has been put in a fine condition, and has many conveniences so essential when entertainments are given, — heating apparatus, running water, etc. For all these improvements a considerable sum of money has been required, the major part of which has been generously and willingly given by Miss Mary Sanford, daughter of the late Samuel B. Sanford. The library has already a fair assortment of books, some of which have been purchased by the committee appointed for that pur-

pose, and others have been donated by interested friends.

This was not the first library established in Bennington, for one was proposed as early as 1793, and a meeting of subscribers called, which finally resulted in the establishment of a public library in April, 1796, for the benefit of those who chose to become proprietors, under the direction of the Rev. Job Swift, Colonel Nathaniel Brush, Dr. Micah J. Lyman, Anthony Haswell, and Captain John Norton. David Russell, one of the first editors of the "*Vermont Gazette*," was secretary.

Another library was established later; for we read in the "*Vermont Gazette*," published in 1830, that "a valuable library has been attached to the academy, to which any student may have access by contributing to its fund the trifling sum of twelve and a half cents per quarter."

The old brick academy can no longer boast of being "the finest building in the county;" but to those who are so closely associated with its past, no other could take its place, so we hope and trust that it will ever be carefully preserved as one of our most precious landmarks, inexpressibly dear to every old resident of "Bennington on the Hill."



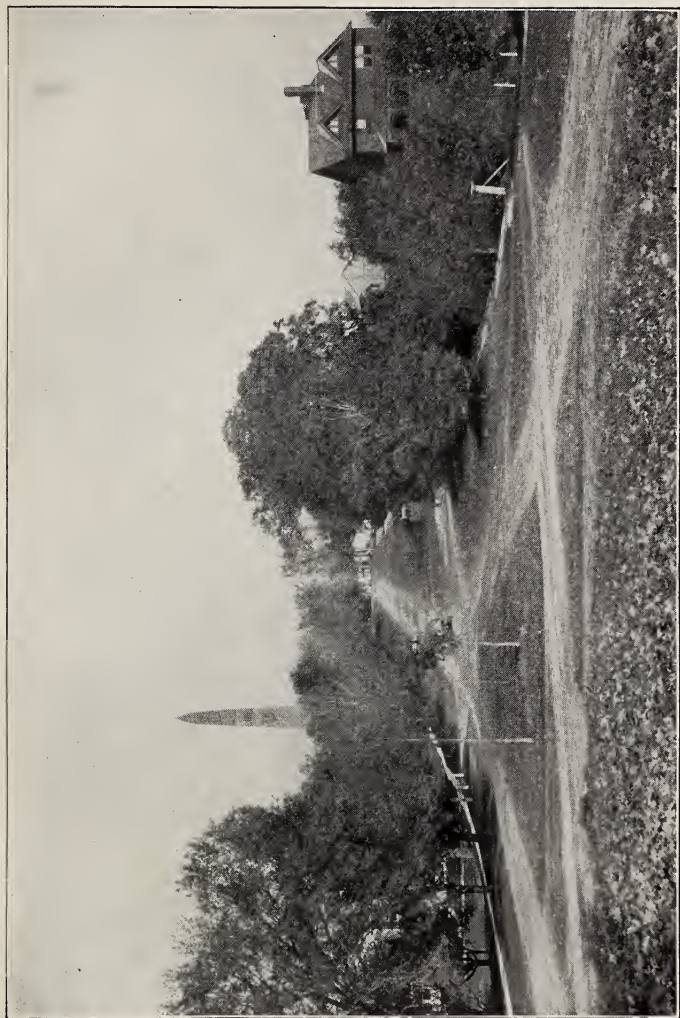
## THE SIXTEENTH OF AUGUST AND TRAINING-DAYS

THE anniversary of the battle so bravely fought on August 16, 1777, was celebrated always in Bennington with joy and thanksgiving. "The morning was ushered in with the firing of a national salute, the same piece of ordnance being used which was captured from the British on the day of the Bennington battle." The national flag was raised on the court-house, and very early in the morning the people began to congregate, prepared to enjoy what was a red-letter day in the town's early history.

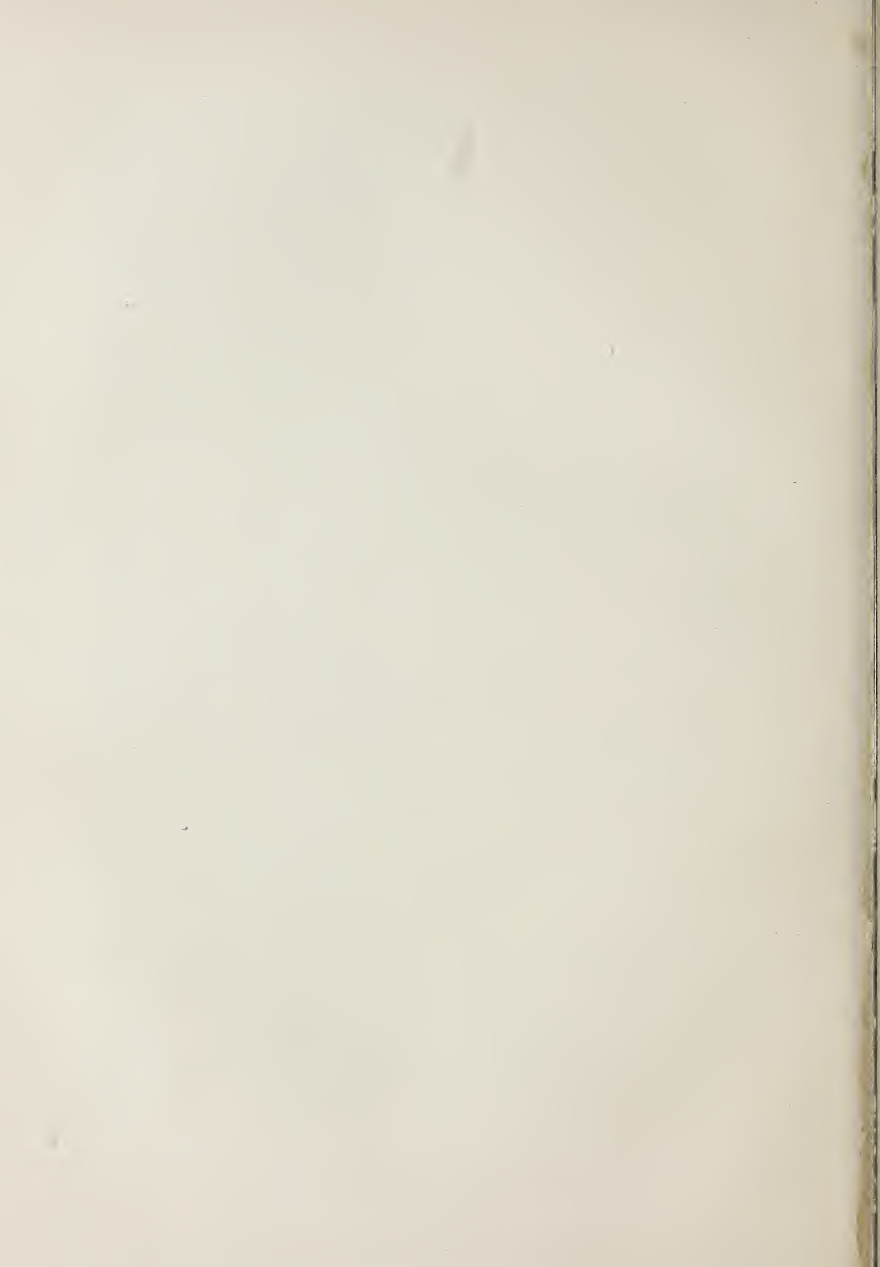
Large delegations from the neighboring towns also gathered here to witness or take part in the yearly celebration. A procession was formed near where the Battle Monument now stands, in which the survivors of the battle or their descendants took a prominent part.

At first these processions were escorted by Captain Robinson's Cavalry and Captain Safford's Light Infantry. They marched down the broad street to





"DOWN THE BROAD STREET"



the First Church, where they listened to an oration, and then marched back to the State Arms, where a dinner was served, at which toasts were given and responded to with much spirit and grace.

In the "Vermont Gazette," published in August, 1826, an interesting account is given of the celebration on the forty-ninth anniversary of the Bennington battle, when General David Robinson was president of the day. Twenty-four young ladies, representing the States of the Union, joined the procession on the brow of the hill, near the residence of General Robinson, and "performed the grateful duty of strewing roses in the pathway of the veterans as they entered the sanctuary."

In 1840, on the sixty-third anniversary of the battle, the "Vermont Gazette" states that "there was such a congregating of men as were never before known in old Bennington, and is supposed to be, from the best estimate, the largest collection of freemen that ever assembled in the State. The procession that came in from Pownal and Berkshire in carriages was one and a half miles in length; the procession from Shaftsbury and northern towns formed one of about three miles in length." And

that "from seven to eight thousand dinners were eaten at the public table on that day."

This procession was the most grand and imposing that ever had been seen in Bennington. General David Robinson, at this time eighty-six years of age, and Mr. Samuel Safford were the only surviving heroes of the battle present. Colonel Orsamus C. Merrill was president of the day.

Farther back than we can remember, a regular time was appointed each year for military drill, called "Training-Day," familiarly spoken of as "June Training." Judging from what we are told by those who were present on these interesting occasions, it must have been another red-letter day, not only in the town, but in the neighboring hamlets, whose residents flocked to our village in great numbers. Hucksters of various kinds temptingly displayed their wares, which generally found a ready sale. Doubtless there are some alive now who remember eating a card of Mrs. Suttle's gingerbread, known far and near as "Mrs. Suttleses' best." This gingerbread, we are told, was light in color as well as weight.

In those early days martial music consisted largely of fifes and drums, and many interesting anecdotes

are told of the expert drummers and fifers of that early period. It is said of one man who excelled as a snare-drummer that he often used three drumsticks, keeping one in the air while he beat time with the other two. It is also related of James Whittum, called Uncle Jim, that often when he played the fife it could be heard two miles away. Uncle Jim boasted of having once split a fife.

There was a noted character in our town whose services were indispensable on a "Training-Day" in June; his name was Joel Gill. He was a gentleman of color, one of the blackest of his race, and an enthusiast in military matters, believing evidently in the strictest discipline.

While inclined at times to indulge in ardent spirits, he never imbibed until the exercises were over. It is said that his acquaintance with prominent people throughout the State was very large, and at his death we lost a valuable encyclopædia of knowledge concerning the local matters connected with the town.

His laugh was contagious, and we irresistibly laughed with him. We recall also his figure, still erect, and the martial bearing he could so readily assume. There was a tender side to his nature, and

when the past and its associations were recalled, the tears would trickle down the dusky face, which generally was wreathed in smiles.

He was for many years identified with the Bennington Cornet Band, and guarded its uniform with the greatest care, proud to wear it on public occasions, when he assumed at once a military air. The band was never out save with Joel at his post by the side of the bass-drum; but it is many years since we have seen him march, for Joel died a quarter of a century ago, and would have been pleased and proud to have known that his beloved band turned out with full ranks to escort his remains to the grave, thus carrying out a wish that this faithful servant had so often expressed.

These celebrations, so much enjoyed by the Bennington boys half a century ago, have gone quite out of fashion; but we are thoroughly in sympathy with the views expressed by ex-President Harrison regarding the old-time Fourth of July celebration. "Its simple parades and musters, the reading of the Declaration, and the oration that more than supplied the lack of glitter and color in the parade, once the event of the year, went out of fashion. We allowed ourselves to be laughed out of it.



It may be that the speaker was boastful, but a boaster is better than a pessimist. The day as a patriotic anniversary was almost lost, and a family picnic-day or a baseball-day substituted. It is coming back, and we ought to aid in reinstating it. The old Declaration has a pulse in it and a ring to it that does the soul good."



## THE OLD COURT-HOUSE

THE first court-house in Bennington was built of wood in 1781, and stood east of where the Battle Monument now stands. It was destroyed by fire on May 17, 1809.

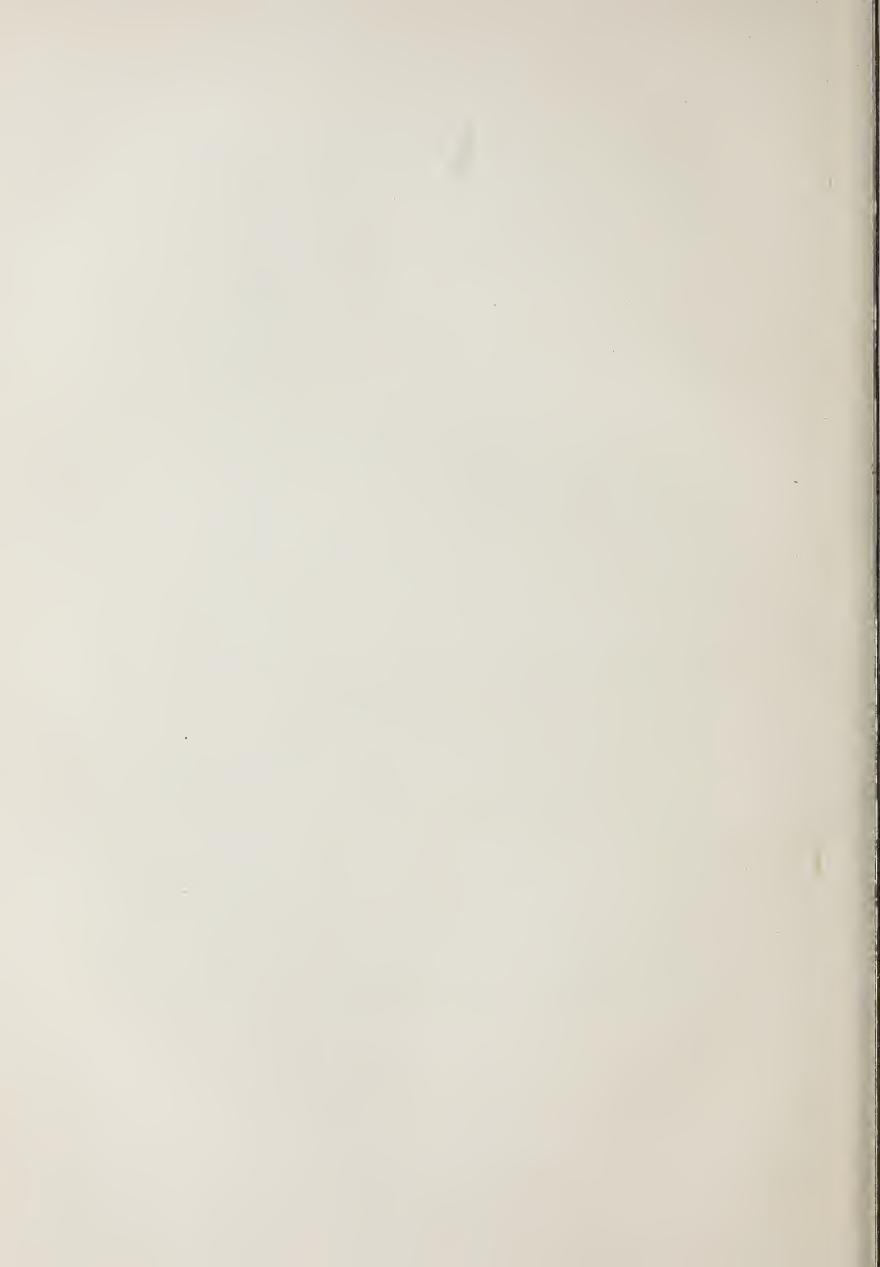
Dramatic entertainments were held in this building as early as 1787, advertised to begin "at six o'clock exactly," showing that Bennington people in those early days kept early hours.

The second court-house was also of wood, and stood very near the first, — west of the grounds of Mr. George Worthington, whose attractive home, Worthlea, has added much to the beauty of that part of the town. The property adjoining Mr. Worthington's, north, belongs to Miss Mary Sanford, whose artistic new home, the Priory, is worthy of much admiration. The second court-house was burned on October 28, 1846, "with a loss to the county of about three thousand dollars."

The third court-house, built of brick, stood near the house where Ethan Allen lived, and, with its



THE OLD COURT-HOUSE



tall white pillars, made quite an imposing structure, dividing honors with its other neighbor, the Old White Church, whose bell was rung to call the court together morning and afternoon.

The sheriff always escorted the judges to the court-house. To the right, as you entered the building, there was a room occupied as a law-office by S. H. Blackmer. To the left was another room, occupied by the Hon. A. B. Gardner, a leading lawyer, and at one time lieutenant-governor of the State. The back part of the building on the lower floor was used on election day as a voting-place, and the rest of the year as a furniture repository. The upper floor consisted of a court-room, sheriff's room, consultation room, etc. The court-room was a pleasant one in winter, having windows on three sides, which made it sunny and cheerful.

Concerts and other entertainments were held here for years. The famous Hutchinson Family, Barker Family, and the Peak Bell Ringers always filled the room when they gave a concert.

The convening of court fifty years ago was quite an event here on the Hill ; and when this third court-house was unfortunately destroyed by fire on March 26, 1869, it was a bitter disappointment to the

people of old Bennington to have the new court house located in the East Village.

Happening into the court-room one day last winter, I was reminded of old times by seeing the venerable H. K. Fowler, of Manchester, Vermont, inside the bar. None of his contemporaries were present; the faces he looked upon were those of persons who were children when he was active in his profession, and a few of the younger lawyers were unborn at that time. As I looked at this well-preserved man, familiar to me since my earliest recollection, I wondered if his mind reverted to court days in the old building upon the Hill, when the judges all had gray hair that stood up like bristles, and solemn faces, and bore the names of Kellogg, Pierpont, Williams, and Redfield; when two large stoves filled with long sticks of wood made the atmosphere of the room endurable those old-fashioned winter days; when snow was plenty, and people came to court in sleighs; and when greetings were exchanged with Edgerton, of Rutland, Miner, Sargeant, and Roberts, of Manchester, Harmon Canfield, of Arlington, John S. Robinson, Tarrent Sibley, Pierpont Isham, A. P. Lyman, J. H. Cushman, G. W. Harmon, and others, of Bennington.

In the old court-house, boys were allowed to sell apples, popcorn, and home-made molasses candy while court was in session; but they moved noiselessly about, and were tidy in their appearance, making no trouble.

A gentleman still living tells the remarkable story of one of the side judges consuming a peck of apples a day during session.

A well-known citizen was sheriff for a long time, who was very fond of playing a joke. One day he met an old friend who lived just outside our village, and asked him why he did not come to court. His friend replied that he would like to come, but, being very bald, he did not dare sit with his hat off in the court-room. The sheriff then assured him that he could keep his hat on.

Shortly after the conversation, the man appeared in court, and took a seat in a conspicuous place. He wore a beaver hat of unusual height. It was soon time to open court. The sheriff rapped for order, and requested all to remove their hats. The owner of the tall beaver, remembering his conversation with the sheriff, sat happy and serene in his seat. He was the only person in the room who had not uncovered his head. Again the sheriff rapped



on his desk and asked that hats be removed at once. By this time all eyes were focused on Mr. —, who at last began to realize that he was fast becoming an object of curiosity. Again the sheriff pounded on his desk, and this time pointed his finger at the man with the tall beaver, who was not long in removing his hat. This was an amusing incident to all who witnessed it; but the individual who had been made so conspicuous vowed that he would get even with the sheriff some day, which no doubt he did.

Lawyers were heard in this old court-room who were afterwards famous. We remember the brilliant Oscar L. Shafter, from Windham County. He became one of the most eminent jurists of California. Judge Samuel Phelps was also heard here, and his son, Edward J. Phelps, now recognized as an accomplished scholar, jurist, and diplomat.

Old Bennington has furnished many able judges to preside over the courts of Vermont. Among them were Hiland Hall and Pierpont Isham, the former being twice elected governor of Vermont.

Stenographers and pretty typewriters were unknown in those days, when testimony had to be written down by hand. How the old quill-pens



squeaked as they were rushed over the paper! Fancy-colored blotters were never seen, but in their place sand was used, shaken out of boxes as pepper and salt in seasoning. Many of the inkstands were made of wood, but to our childish eyes looked quite elegant. As we grew older we did copying for lawyers, who were always patient and kind in assisting us to decipher hastily written technical terms. Those who employed us have long since passed away, but those early experiences we often recall with great pleasure.

## STAGING DAYS

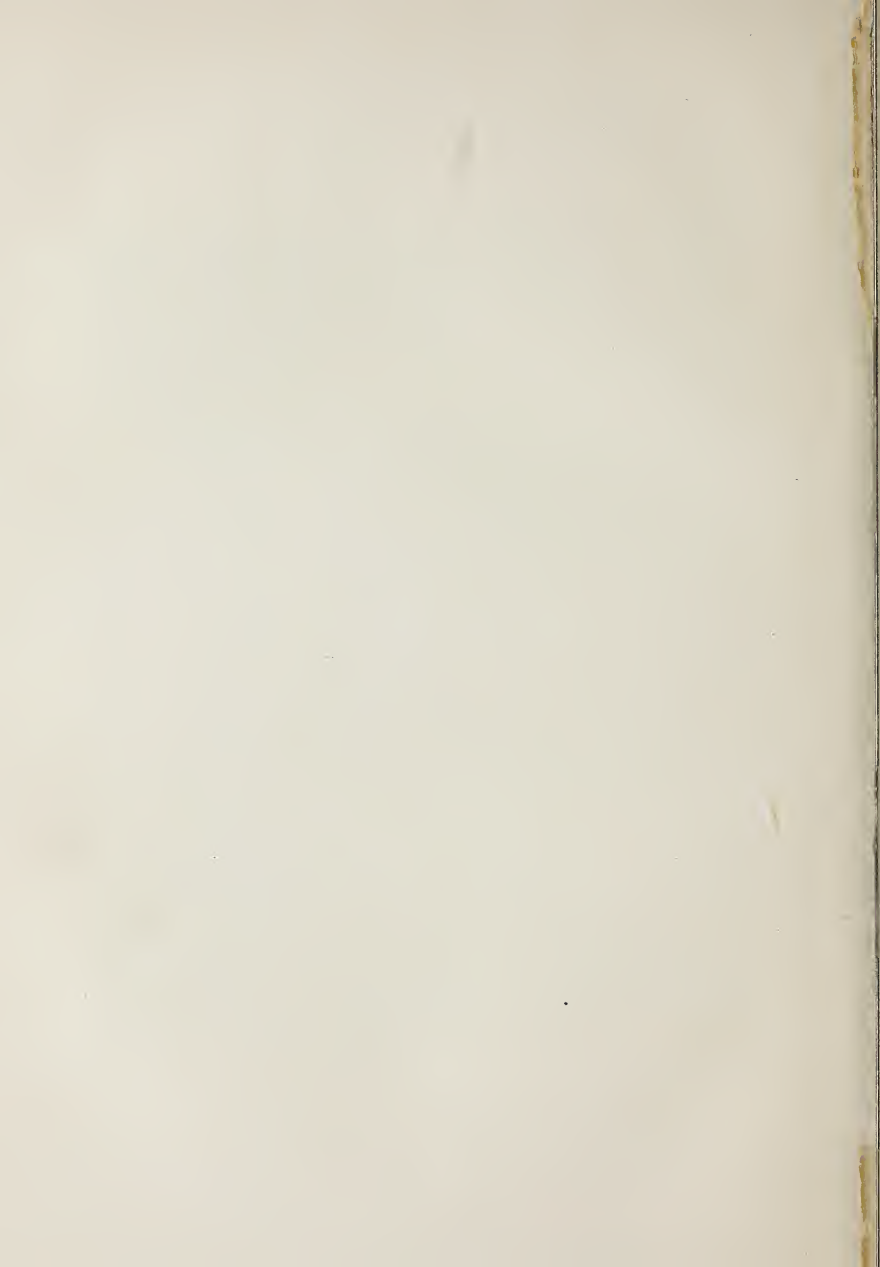
WE can just see how the old stage-coach looked, drawn by four horses, as at full speed they dashed around the corner, the driver cracking his whip as only those old experts could do, and coming to a standstill in front of the Walloomsac Inn, half a century or more ago. All the drivers of that period are dead except one, who is still living in town.

Landlord Hicks was always on hand to "welcome the coming and speed the parting guest." This old hostelry, built in 1776, and famous since Revolutionary days for its excellent table, always had a goodly number of guests, while the State Arms on the brow of the Hill was equally well kept and patronized. The old register of the State Arms could show many distinguished names at that period, and the names of those who were to become noted as the years passed.

Dr. Peckham, of New York, was a regular summer guest at this house. His nephew, Hon. Rufus



THE WALLOOMSAC INN



W. Peckham, now an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, passed a summer within its hospitable walls when a lad. Dr. Peckham's brother, Rufus W. Peckham, Sr., afterward one of the judges of the New York Court of Appeals, selected the Walloomsac Inn as his summer home.

In staging days, old "Bennington on the Hill" was a business centre, and the leading village in the county. The Bennington Bank stood just north of the brick academy, and on the same street, further up, was a printing-house. Here the "Vermont Gazette" was published, the first newspaper printed in the State. Looking over its time-worn files, we are reminded by the various advertisements that several general stores once catered to the wants of the community. One of these old-time stores is now utilized as a woodshed by a prominent Troy lawyer, who has a delightful summer home here.

John Fay, so long the sweet-voiced chorister of the old First Church, was once a clerk in this store. He was not only an amusing story-teller, but a practical joker as well. One warm summer afternoon he was alone in the store engaged in preparing prescriptions, — for most of the country stores at

that time carried a stock of drugs, — when there appeared in the doorway a well-known citizen living in the west part of the town, familiarly known as Uncle Hi.

After an exchange of friendly greetings, Mr. Fay told him he was preparing an important prescription and needed his assistance, but felt it his duty to tell him that he must be very careful not to sneeze, as that would mean almost instant death.

Uncle Hi at first flatly refused. He said that “life was sweet, and his family were dependent upon him.” But Mr. Fay continued to urge him, asking if he were in the habit of sneezing, when Uncle Hi was obliged to admit that he seldom sneezed. Mr. Fay then told him there would not be the slightest danger, and all that he wished him to do was to stir the mixture while he added the ingredients. Uncle Hi at last consented, and began stirring vigorously, according to instructions, until Mr. Fay saw, as he slowly added the capsicum, that his friend’s face was fast becoming scarlet. Suddenly Uncle Hi ceased operations and called out: “John, you said — if I sneezed — it meant death. If I don’t — sneeze — it will be my death.” Then followed such a succession of sneezes that Mr. Fay laughed

until he thought it might result in his own death, for a more ludicrous sight he had never seen than frightened Uncle Hi, who vowed it would be the last time he would ever assist John Fay in preparing prescriptions.

Another store comes to mind as we write, that was in existence years before we were born, and continued to do business until we reached manhood. Jars containing liquids of various shades, such as are seen in drug-stores, made the front windows attractive.

Confectionery and toys were temptingly arranged on the shelves. Pocket-combs, knives, jew's-harps, and Jenny Lind gum were to be seen in the little show-case on the counter. Bunches of red, white, and blue tippets hung by the door, and many other articles that took the eye of boys now scattered all over the country. The proprietor, Mr. Martin Scott, always our friend, died suddenly one winter morning, just after business had commenced for the day. The building has been moved to another part of the village, extensive repairs have been made to it, and now it is pleasantly spoken of as the "Park and Tilford" of Bennington.

Nearly opposite the old site of this store, William



Lloyd Garrison issued weekly "The Journal of the Times," from October, 1828, until March, 1829.

William Lown, in his day a noted carriage-maker of Troy, once carried on business here quite extensively; also Joseph Ogden.

Bennington has always enjoyed the reputation of having physicians of ability; three were on the Hill in old times. Dr. William Bigelow lived near the State Arms, and Drs. Noadiah and Heman Swift lived near the Walloomsac Inn. Two grandsons of Dr. Bigelow — George S. Robinson and John Squires — are now prominent among Troy's business men. A great-grandson of Dr. Noadiah Swift, Dr. Reynolds Tillinghast, is a promising physician and surgeon in New York at the present time.

From this little town have gone forth into the world at large men who have become widely known in the professions they have chosen.

The Rev. E. H. Chapin, the famous pulpit orator, went from this village; also the Rev. Charles Seymour Robinson, D. D., for so many years the pastor of the Memorial Church in New York.

Daniel Robinson, for so long president of the old Troy and Boston Railroad Company, was born in

Bennington and spent his boyhood here. It was his master mind that foresaw the advantages to be gained by tunneling the Hoosac Mountain below North Adams, Massachusetts. He labored for its accomplishment, and lived long enough to ride through its rocky way, and to see the struggling road that he had been the head of consolidated into a grand trunk line, now the popular Boston route, and known as the Fitchburg Railroad line.

Horace F. Clark, whose father, Daniel Clark, was the pastor of the First Church for five years, went from here when a boy to New York city, where he became eminent as a lawyer. He married a daughter of Commodore Vanderbilt, and was long identified with the Vanderbilt interests. At the time of his death, he was president of the Lake Shore Railway.

About 1865, railroad business brought Mr. Clark and a party of New York capitalists to Bennington. It was his first visit since his school-days. At the instance of ex-Governor Hiland Hall, a gentleman was selected to receive him who had been intimate with him in boyhood. This gentleman, Mr. Seymour Merrill, was quite sure of his ability to pick out Mr. Clark, although nearly forty years had

passed since they had met. He had hardly entered the car when he recognized his old-time companion. The recognition was instantaneous on both sides, Augustus Schell remarking to the other gentlemen of the party that he "would wager that Clark had met an old schoolmate." Mr. Clark, while in Bennington, renewed his acquaintance with many of the friends of his youth. One of the results of his visit was the purchase of the broad acres that now surround the Clark mansion, known as Fernhurst, a most delightful spot.

Mr. Seth B. Hunt, another Bennington boy who went to New York, was clerk for a time for Arthur Tappan, of abolition fame. His beautiful summer residence, Maple Grove, which boasts of having one of the highest natural fountains in the world, is now occupied as a Soldiers' Home, one of the finest in this country.

Mr. Hunt's name will longest be remembered in connection with the gift of the Free Library to East Bennington, he and Hon. Trenor W. Park sharing equally in this noble philanthropy.

Near the Tichenor place may be seen the old homes of two eminent lawyers: the first having been the residence for many years of the Hon.

Pierpont Isham, one of the most distinguished judges of the Vermont Supreme Court, and the other the home of the Hon. Hiland Hall.

Honors came to Mr. Hall without stint. He was twice elected governor of Vermont; was a judge of the Supreme Court; served eleven years in Congress; was second Comptroller of the United States Treasury; and went to California as one of the land commissioners under the treaty of Mexico, being appointed by President Fillmore. Mr. Hall filled all of these positions with honor to himself and his native State. His death occurred at the advanced age of ninety years; he was beloved by every one.

Back of Governor Hall's old home stands the Mount Anthony Golf Club House, which was once a famous seminary of learning. The names of some of its pupils are chiseled on the stones of our sidewalks, also upon the rocks that surround the cave on the side of Mount Anthony. This street, and particularly this locality, now so quiet, was once thronged with boys, whose shouts often made the long winter evenings cheerful as they skated on the frozen overflow waters of Robinson's swamp.

## WHERE WE WENT TO SCHOOL

WITH its old belfry gone, and a wide veranda on its eastern front, its interior, both below and upstairs, beautifully fitted up as a club-house, one would hardly recognize the structure where years ago Professor George W. Yates made plain to us, in his original and entertaining manner, knotty problems in arithmetic and algebra.

At the opening reception (July 4, 1897), given by the charter members of the Mount Anthony Golf Club, we met many old-time schoolmates.

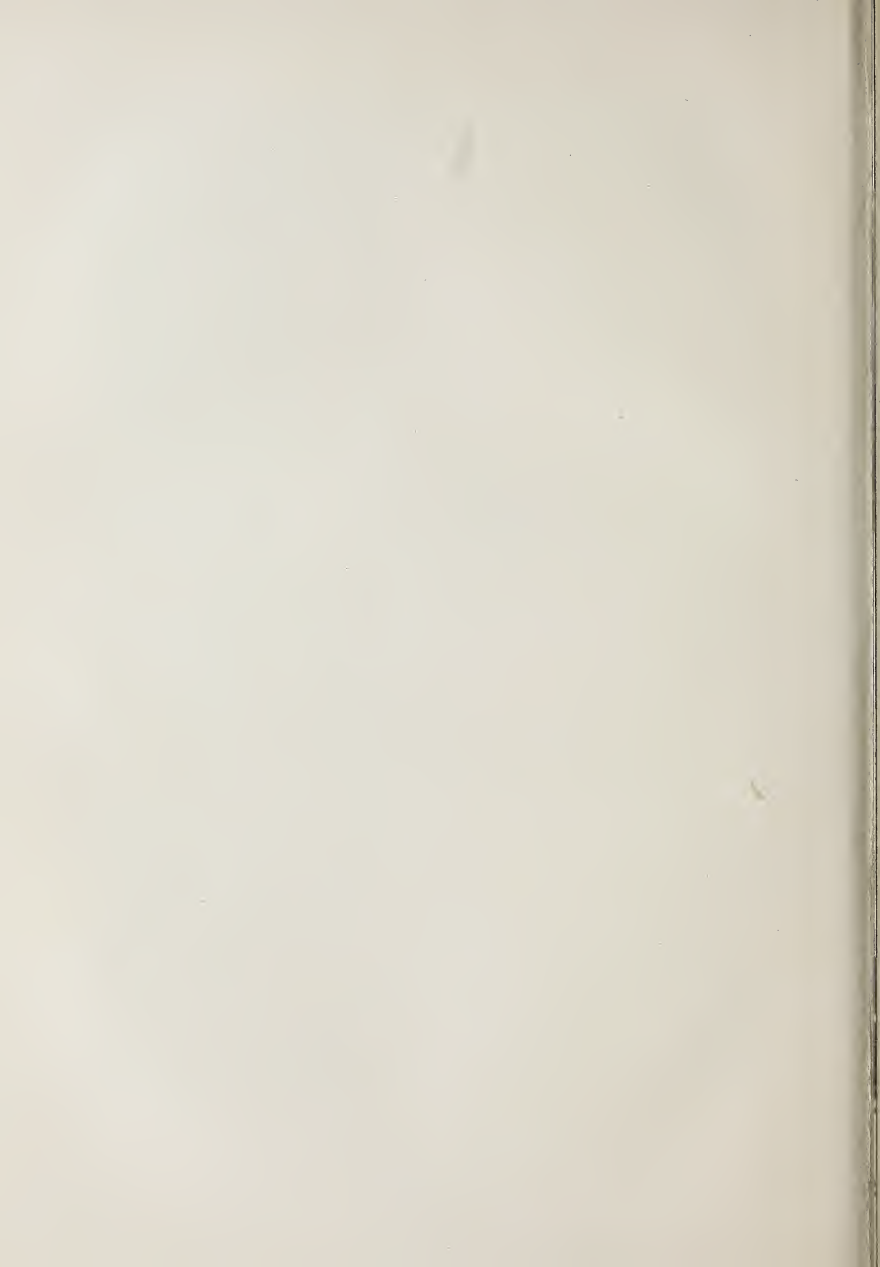
During an interesting conversation with one most pleasantly associated with our boyhood and later-day life, he pointed out where he sat in school-days forty years ago.

Doubtless many present remembered the platform at the end of the school-room, called the stage. It took, I think, but two steps to reach it; but to us it seemed higher than a pulpit when we nervously ascended it, before a room full of people, to go to the big blackboard on examination day, where we





“WHERE WE WENT TO SCHOOL.”





tried our best to demonstrate, with chalk in hand, that Professor Yates's painstaking efforts during the long term had not been in vain.

Boys spoke their pieces Friday afternoons on this same old stage who are to-day prominent as lawyers, clergymen, physicians, and in the various walks of business.

An entertainment was generally given on the last evening of the term, called an exhibition. The programme was of a miscellaneous character, and consisted of singing, declamation, dialogues, and reading of compositions. This entertainment was the event of the season. We had studied our parts thoroughly, and from behind the curtains which concealed the stage we peeped to see if a full house were to witness our triumph. There was always a large attendance of the village people, and the audience was sympathetic, which is very desirable on such occasions. It gave courage also to those behind the footlights. Most of the families in town were represented on the stage, which accounted, no doubt, for the large number present.

There were three brothers who attended school at the seminary who little thought, as the days of that happy period passed, that great hardships were

to be endured, as well as dangers to be faced, when school-days were over.

The eldest of these brothers fought with the boys in gray, while the two younger followed the stars and stripes, in the War of the Rebellion. The first-mentioned, we believe, was killed at the battle of Nashville, Tennessee, under General Hood; the other brothers are alive and well, though one stopped a rebel bullet and was dangerously wounded.

It was at the Mount Anthony Seminary that the Rev. E. H. Chapin, D. D., the great pulpit orator, received his education; and also Edward Swift Isham, a leading lawyer in Chicago, partner of Hon. Robert Lincoln, son of the martyred President.

Of those who were companions and acquaintances in those old school-days, we recall Daniel Robinson, who was for many years second vice-president of the great dry-goods house of H. B. Claflin & Co., of New York city; C. H. Webb, of the house of Dunham, Buckley & Co.; and S. Waldo Sibley, of John L. Bremer & Co., both of New York city; also S. B. Hall, cashier of the First National Bank, North Bennington; Henry Harmon, now a prominent lawyer in Rutland, Vermont; and the Rev. David Beach, of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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As I write these well-remembered names of boys, many of whom were my schoolmates, and whose success in life has been so marked and honorable, there come vividly to mind others who went in and out of the old school-room, whose lives were cut short when hardly upon the threshold of young manhood, and when the future seemed so bright with promise. I recall the once familiar face and form of my elder brother, Henry Seymour. Incidents of his love and unselfishness are still fresh in memory, though long and eventful years have passed since he was laid away in the cemetery.

Far from loved ones, and from the peaceful scenes of their New England homes, amid the roar of battle, Captain Frank Ray and Lieutenant George Hicks fell while fighting for their country in the War of the Rebellion.

As we left the old seminary (henceforth to bear a new name) on that bright July afternoon, the scene, though pretty, was a novel one.

Gayly dressed ladies chatted on the piazza with gentlemen in knickerbockers, while stylish turnouts dotted the broad lawn below.

We thought of the mornings and afternoons we had gathered on the playground, and of the many

pleasant hours spent in the old boarding-house, now fast going to decay, but once filled with happy boys and girls; yet, while time in its course has wrought many changes, Nature, always kind, still has the same old reception for us. Mount Anthony, but a short distance away, is unchanged. The cave on the side of one of its slopes, so wonderful to us in boyhood, is yet an object of interest. The old "green road," that we remember so well, winds its way through the dark woods until the summit is reached, but the feet that walk in these old-time places are younger than ours.

## OLD-TIME CIRCUS DAYS

IN these days of steam and electric cars, flying-machines, and spectacular entertainments, the average boy of the period would hardly be satisfied with the "Old-Time Circus," with its one ring, and, for a long time, one clown; but he generally made up in quality what was lacking in quantity; and, for that matter, some of those bygone sons of Momus were far ahead of some of their later-day brethren. One circus and menagerie that comes to mind had two elephants. They were down on the bills as "Famous War Elephant Hannibal" and performing elephant "Tippo Saib." Hannibal was a large fellow and headstrong. He ignored his keeper on one of his visits here, and was soon in the garden of one of our residents, where he regaled himself with a breakfast of early vegetables. The owner did not attempt to drive him away. Sometimes we would have an economical turn, and resolve in our mind that we would content ourselves with viewing the parade. But when we saw the big tent gayly

trimmed with flags, and heard the band play, our well-formed resolutions to be saving vanished like drops of water on a parched pavement. We were in such a state of excitement that the price of admission would have been very high to have kept us outside the tent, if the bank was in any sort of condition. The jokes and comic songs of the clown amused us greatly, and we laughed until our sides ached.

Often the circus would come to town by way of the Hoosac road, and we tossed restlessly on our beds the night preceding their coming; for we were anxious to be up early to see the preparations that were made prior to entering the village. It was the custom to halt near the Dewey Hubbell homestead. Here the thin, jaded horses would be decked with gaudy plumes, and the elephants partially covered with what we were told were "Oriental trappings." The elephants would quench their thirst from the stream that flowed by the roadside, and then with their long trunks would squirt the water high in the air, greatly to our delight.

We don't remember much about three-card monte men or shell men, but there were plenty of peddlers of various wares; and we can hear their metallic voices, as first one would cry out: "Apple-pie that



will make you cry, with Danby cheese that will make you sneeze." Then another would sing out: "This way, gentlemen, for a cake of radgical, pradgical, sadgical soap, dug out of the 'Mammoth Cave' in Kentucky; it purifies the conscience and cleanses the shirt-collar." Still another called out: "Chinese vegetable salve; cures corns, warts, and moles." Tired, heated, and surfeited with peanuts, lemonade, and candy, we wended our way home satisfied. But when again the bright-colored bills were seen on the outer walls of barns and other places, we were ready to receive the show as of old.

Advertising a circus was not as thoroughly done as in these days, but the advertising by word of mouth must have been just as effectual; for on the day of exhibition there were to be seen on our streets forms and faces of those not only forgotten, but in some cases the "carved faces" of people that we had supposed had been gathered to their fathers for a long time.

Speaking of circuses reminds me of the "Minstrel Backus" story about the boy who said to his mother: "I want to go to the circus, I do." "My son," said the fond mother, "I can't let you go this time; but if you will be a good boy, I will take you some day to see your grandfather's grave."



## SHOPS BY THE WAYSIDE

MAMMOTH factories, equipped with the latest improved machinery and filled with skilled workmen, turning out daily thousands of pairs of shoes in almost endless variety of styles, have driven out of business the old-time shops which once were indispensable in a country village. We have particularly in mind two of the latter, and the simple story we have to tell about them may perhaps bring to the mind of some reader experiences similar to ours. Boss Stearns's shoe-shop stood on one of the pretty side streets in our village, a short distance from where the Battle Monument now stands. The proprietor lived in a little white house just below the shop. He was quite a dignified-looking man, was of a musical turn, and sang in the choir of the Old First Church. We have a picture of that choir, and the once familiar face of Boss Stearns is easily recognized. The old shop was a low, two-story building. There were two rooms on the lower floor, the first, upon entering, being a sort of wait-

ing-room. Here your feet were measured. A short counter with a desk at the end was on one side, and against one of the walls stood a case with glass in the doors, where finished work was kept. From this room you entered the one where we lingered long whenever we were permitted to visit the shop. As we remember it, the room was full of sunshine. A long window was on the side fronting the street. It slid back, and the air that came into the little room in those summer days of childhood seemed sweeter than summer air nowadays. Men living in the neighborhood frequented the place, and their voices, pitched high, were often heard debating some political question. It was a cozy room in winter. The old wood-stove gave out a good heat, and during this time of the year the sitters were many. Boss Stearns was an expert drummer in his day, and often he has amused us, keeping good time with his hammer as he pounded the leather soles on his old lap-stone. We have had boots made in New York city, and shoes made in Paris; but the boots made for us by Boss Stearns, with the little nick at the top of the boot-leg, called the "Boss's mark," gave us the most pleasure. The old shop was long since taken down, its proprietor has

been at rest for many years, but the pleasant hours passed in the little square room come often to mind.

Away from the village, on a hill, stands another shoe-shop of the olden time. It is a quaint little building, and once, no doubt, looked bright in its coat of red paint; but the storms of many years, and the burning sun of countless summer days, have faded its timeworn clapboards, and age has plainly put its stamp on the structure that has always stood in the same old spot, and is unchanged in every way since first our eyes looked upon it, far back in boyhood days. Below it lies the valley of the Hoosac; the location is pretty and inviting; old trees skirt the narrow roadway that further on joins the main highway leading to Troy. Here for a lifetime (and a long one) "Uncle Ebon" plied his trade. There was a small wooden sign over the low, narrow door. On its white background, black figures rudely painted of a boot and shoe could be seen, emblematic of the owner's business calling. Year after year the old man sat on his bench by the window and pegged and pegged, and stitched and stitched, until his life's record counted over fourscore years; yet he always seemed happy and

contented, until she who had started early on life's journey with him, in those years that seemed so far away, tired of life's burdens, left him for a while: then we noticed that the rugged form weakened under its load of sorrows and cares; and as time grew apace, we came to see that our old friend of a lifetime, like the waving grain in the fields near by, was fast ripening for the harvest. The reaper came at last; and now, as we journey over the oft-traveled road, we see the little low building, with its rudely painted sign, but we miss the salutations we were wont to receive, for our friend, the old shoemaker, has left us forever.

A long two-story building that stood west of his house was used by Uncle Hiram as a carpenter-shop. How delighted we were if we could visit him here and watch him as he worked! Fresh and sweet was the odor of the long curly shavings that fell to the floor, and later found their way into our basket. How interested we were in the stories that he would tell us, for Uncle Hiram was very amusing in a way peculiar to himself. Children instinctively gathered about him. He was fond of them, and they seemed to know it. He was never harsh or impatient, but, on the contrary, was

always gentle and cheerful. Uncle Hiram once told the writer that at one time a school was held near his house. One day, as the girls were playing at recess, he for amusement offered a two-shilling piece to the girl who was the fastest runner of the group, and a York shilling to the one who was the slowest. The children were to start at the same time, each to do her best to touch a certain part of a building that stood near. A short, thick-set little girl was the last to touch the spot selected by Uncle Hiram. She received her shilling, the prize offered to assuage the feelings of the one less fleet than the rest. Many were the years that passed after this incident. The little chubby girl grew to womanhood, was married, and moved away. Uncle Hiram, always industrious, worked at his trade as the seasons came and went. One day, when he had reached the age of perhaps three-score and ten, he received a call from a lady, whom he soon recognized as the once slowest runner of the little group of schoolgirls. Uncle Hiram was delighted to see the lady, now the wife of a millionaire. She reminded him of the incident of which we have written, and, after bidding him good-by, left for him a substantial sum of

money. The act was characteristic of the lady, whose tenderness of heart and generous nature were well known in Bennington. She has long since passed to her reward. The old shop, long unused, is still standing, and looks the same as when Uncle Hiram went at the call of the messenger to join those not lost, but gone before.



## THE FIRST CHURCH AND ITS "GOD'S ACRE"

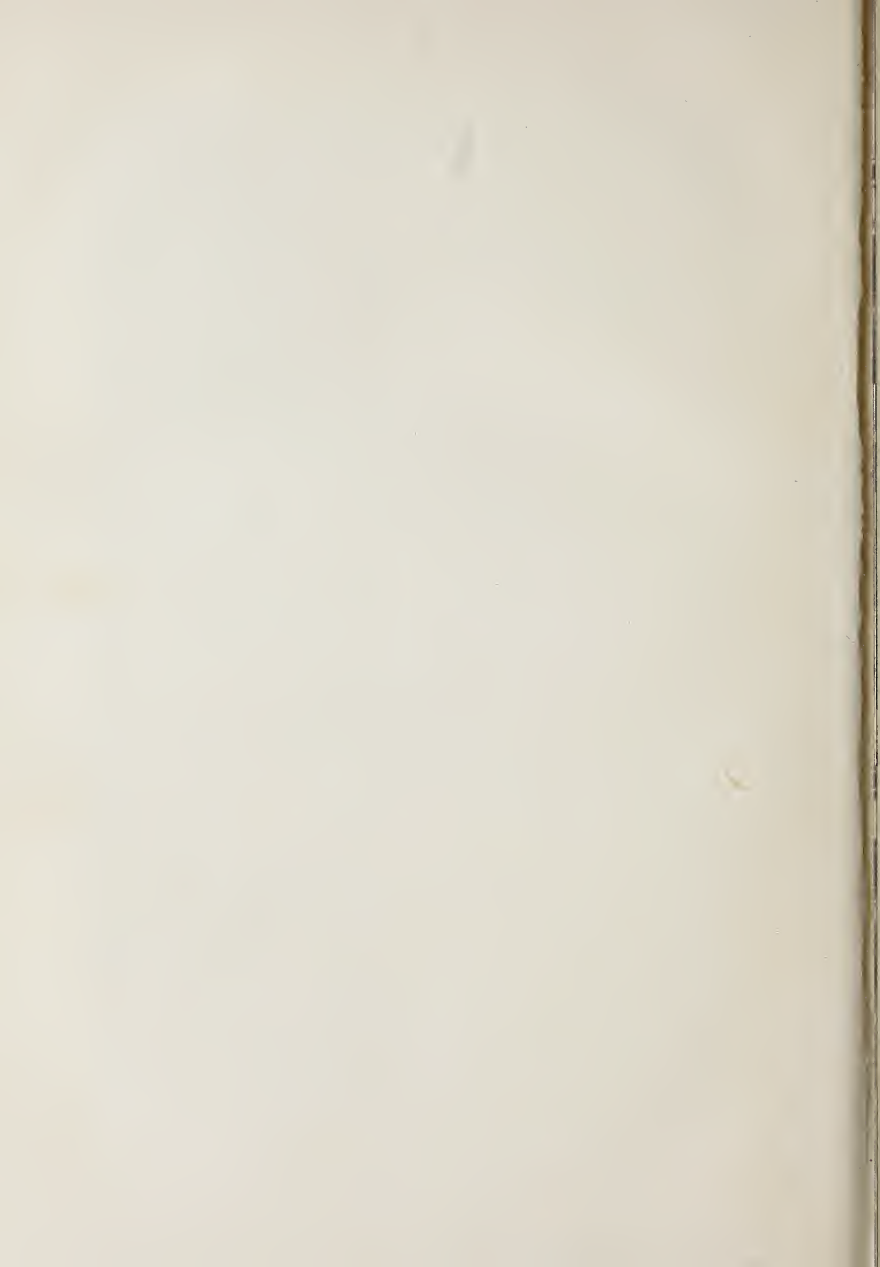
THE Old White Church standing on the corner is of the Christopher Wren style of architecture, and was erected in 1805.

This church was organized in 1763, and is the oldest church in Vermont. Its first building was erected about 1765, and stood in the centre of the Green, opposite the Walloomsac Inn. It was much smaller than the present edifice, so this larger building was considered necessary for the fast-increasing congregation, and was dedicated on New Year's Day, 1806, — the dedicatory sermon being preached by the Rev. Daniel Marsh, who was then pastor of the church. The bell was given by Governor Tichenor, and has the name of the donor inscribed upon it. In 1849 the square pews were removed, and in 1865 the church was thoroughly repaired.

At this time, Mr. Seth B. Hunt, of New York, and Mr. Daniel Robinson, of Troy, both Bennington boys, presented the church with two beautiful



THE OLD FIRST CHURCH



stained-glass windows. The one given by Mr. Hunt became badly broken in time, and was replaced by Mr. Samuel B. Sanford in loving memory of his wife. The one given by Mr. Robinson was placed at the other end of the church, and is still in good condition. While the church was being repaired, services were held in the old court-house, where two young ladies, who had considered themselves fortunate in always being able to secure such a good seat, discovered afterwards, to their mortification, that they had been sitting all summer in the prisoners' box, which had been carefully avoided by the residents of the village.

In 1890 this building, so dear to the Bennington people, was once more repaired; and we hope that it will ever be carefully preserved where it stands, on the corner, like a sentinel guarding the sleepers who rest in its shadow.

Many of these sleepers were heroes who fell in the Revolution, while others gave up their lives on Southern battlefields in the War of the Rebellion. In this modest "God's Acre" rest many who have made history for the State and nation. Simple tombstones mark the resting-place of four governors of Vermont, — Moses Robinson, John S. Robinson,

Hiland Hall, and Isaac Tichenor. A short distance from the Tichenor monument sleeps his neighbor and life-long friend, John Van Der Spiegel, one of the pioneers in the manufacture of stoves.

We also read the names of Hon. Jonathan Robinson, United States Senator during Madison's term; and that of his son-in-law, Colonel O. C. Merrill, member of Congress when Henry Clay was Speaker of the House.

On the opposite side of the driveway rests Anthony Haswell; and, reading the inscription on his tombstone, we learn that he was "a patriot of the Revolution, printer, and founder of the 'Vermont Gazette,' the first newspaper printed in the State."

Many quaint tombstones may be seen in this old churchyard with curious epitaphs.

This is also the last resting-place of the Rev. Jedediah Dewey, first pastor of Vermont, who was a scholar and a great admirer of Shakespeare; so at his request the following lines from "Richard the Second" were carved on his tombstone:—

"Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;  
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes  
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth."

We have often been amused by the ignorance of

our summer visitors, whom we have seen reading this epitaph, and remarking on the "original ideas of the early settlers."

Farther down the driveway we come to a shaft that marks the spot where lies all that is mortal of one of the bravest officers who fell in the Mexican war, — Colonel Martin Scott. He was killed at the battle of Molino del Rey. Scott was educated at West Point, and was stationed for a long time on the Western frontier. He was a noted shot, and his name is associated with the famous coon story which was so often told here years ago.

Scott was out hunting one day, and saw a coon perched on the limb of a tree. He prepared to shoot, when the coon, seeing him, called out, "Don't shoot, colonel; I'll come down!"

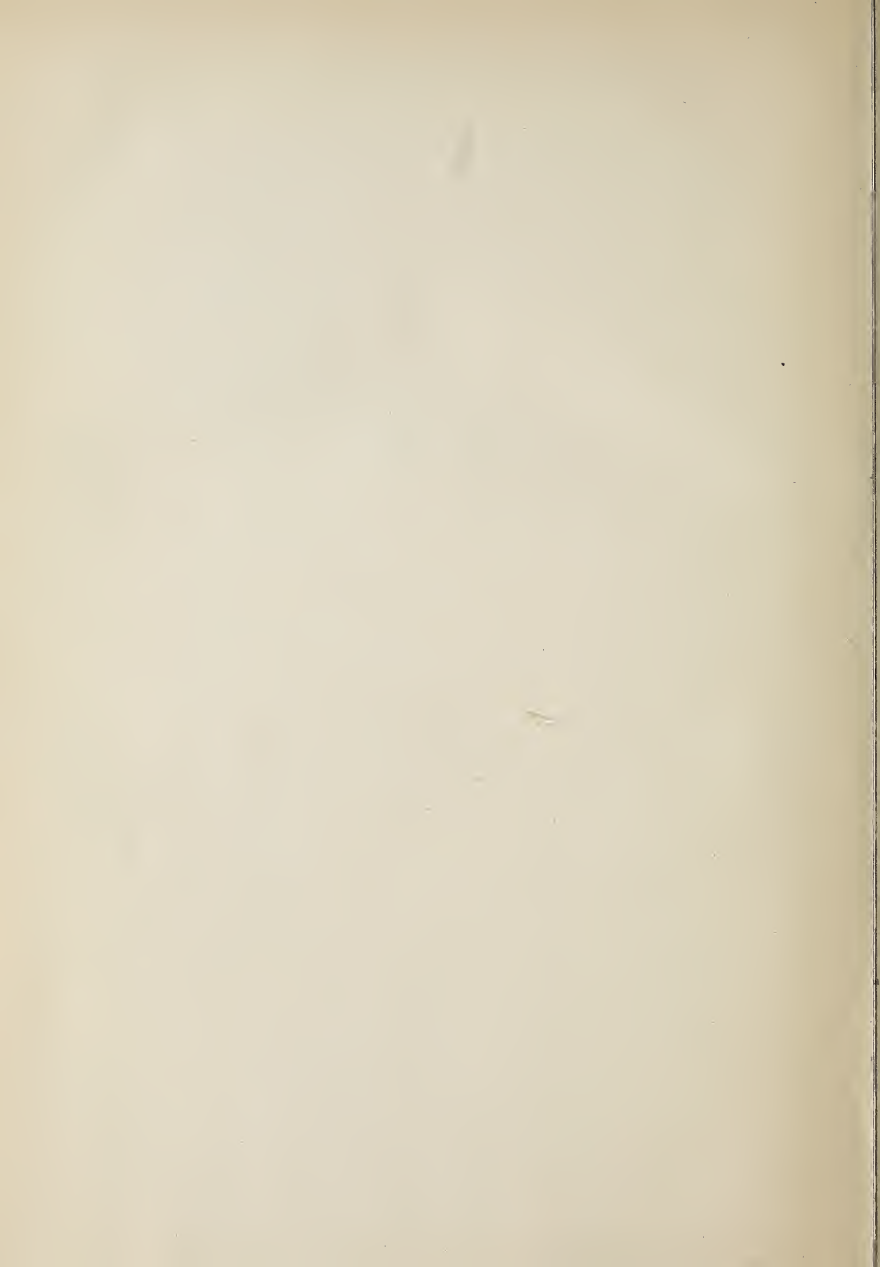
While writing these last few lines, there fell upon my ear the strong, steady tick, tick of the tall old clock that stands just outside my library door. It takes but a trifling thing to stir the memory; but when its flood-gates are once opened, scenes and associations, unthought of perhaps for years, pass like a panorama before one. The old clock, fresh from the hands of its makers, was placed in the northeast corner of the front room, where grand-

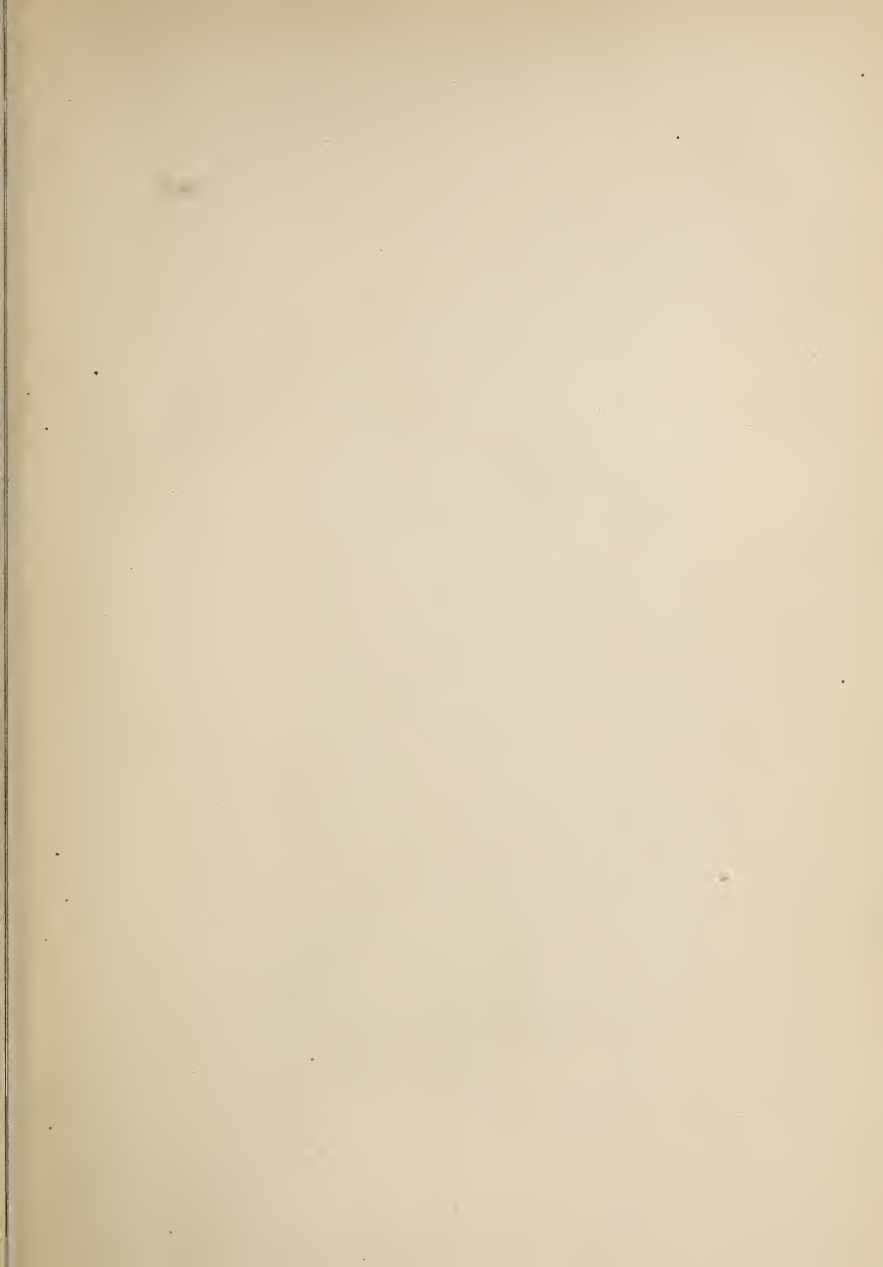


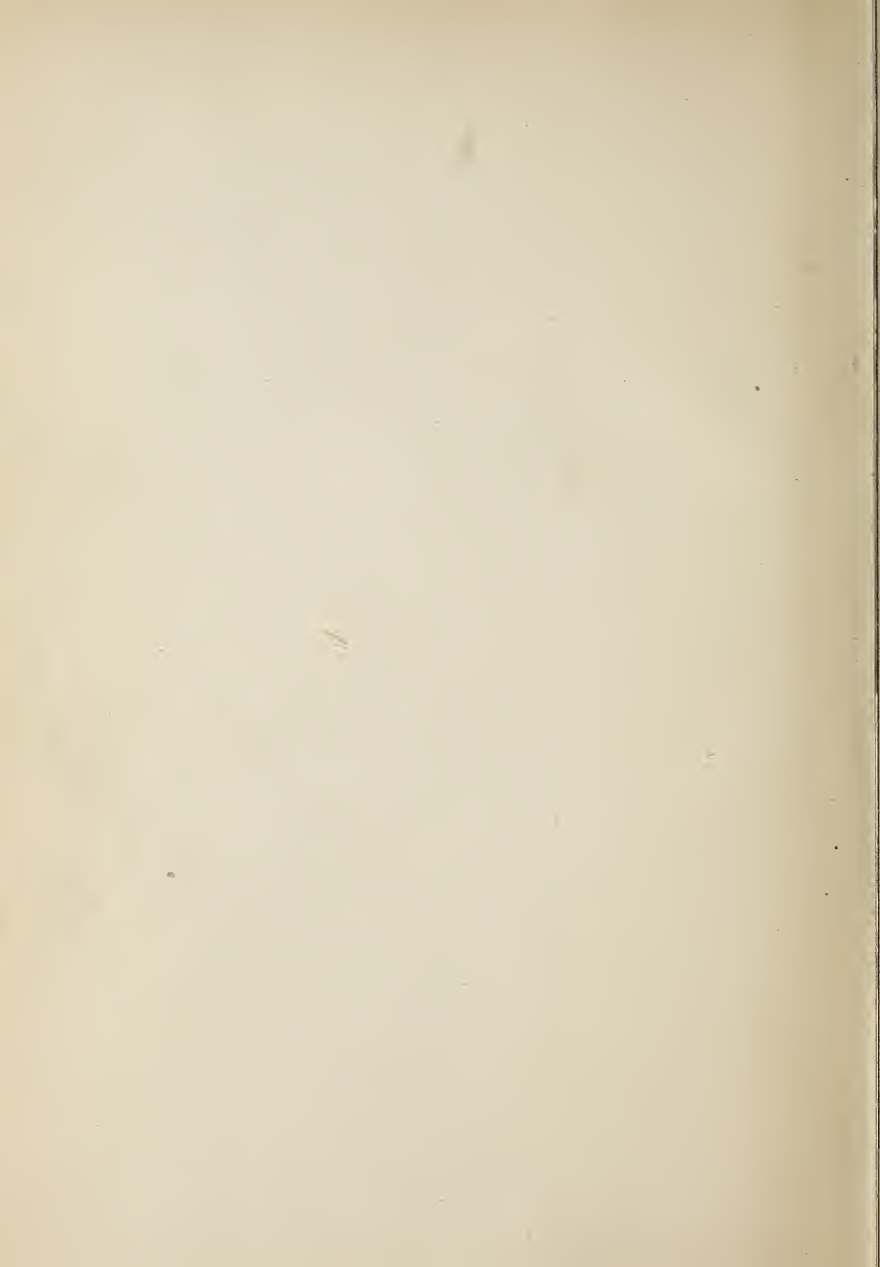
father and grandmother were to pass their lives. As the years rolled by, it became an object of great interest to us children, for it had a musical attachment, and at certain hours it would sing sweetly quaint old tunes, rarely heard by children of the present day.

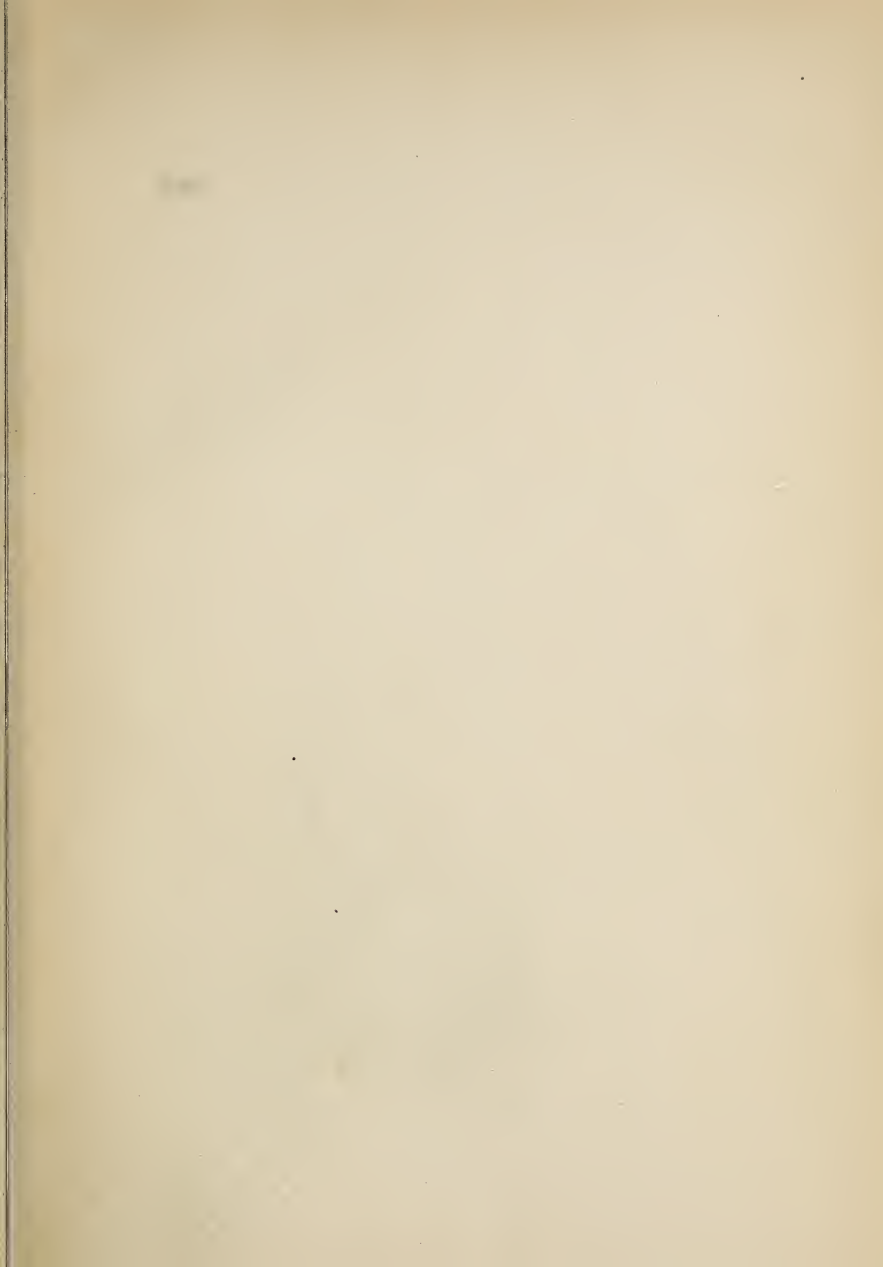
We grew to know the hours it would sing ; and, passing through the large hall into the room where it stood, we would listen with childish delight until the last note had died away. Faithfully the old timepiece performed its duty. It ticked and ticked until nearly all the representatives of two generations had passed on to where time is not reckoned. As I bore the name of my grandfather, the clock was then given to me. It was tenderly and carefully transferred to its new home. The spot for this valued heirloom to stand was a corner in the hall near the stairway. Just now, as I heard it sing one of its old sweet tunes, the memories of the past were awakened, and the old clock stood once more over at grandmother's ; the dear ones were there as of yore ; the syringa bush that stood near the window was in bloom, and the sweet perfume of its blossoms scented the air. A picture was before me of our old-fashioned Sabbath

morning of nearly half a century ago. Time has wrought many changes; but those Sabbath mornings will never be forgotten when our mothers led us to the Old White Church, the tone of whose bell, as it comes from its quaint but artistic belfry, is as mellow as ever; but the kindly greetings of loved ones we miss, for the circle that was once so large is now fast growing small.

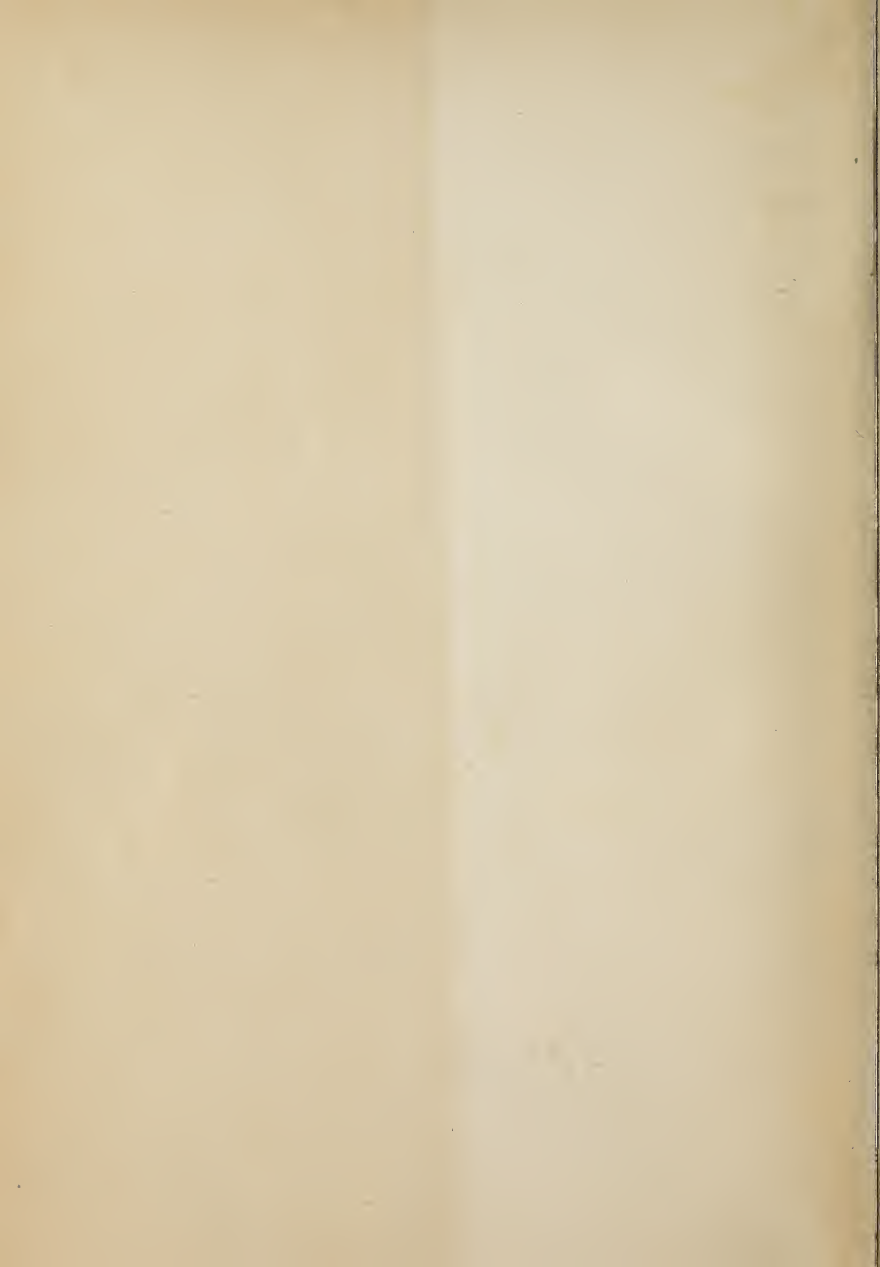












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